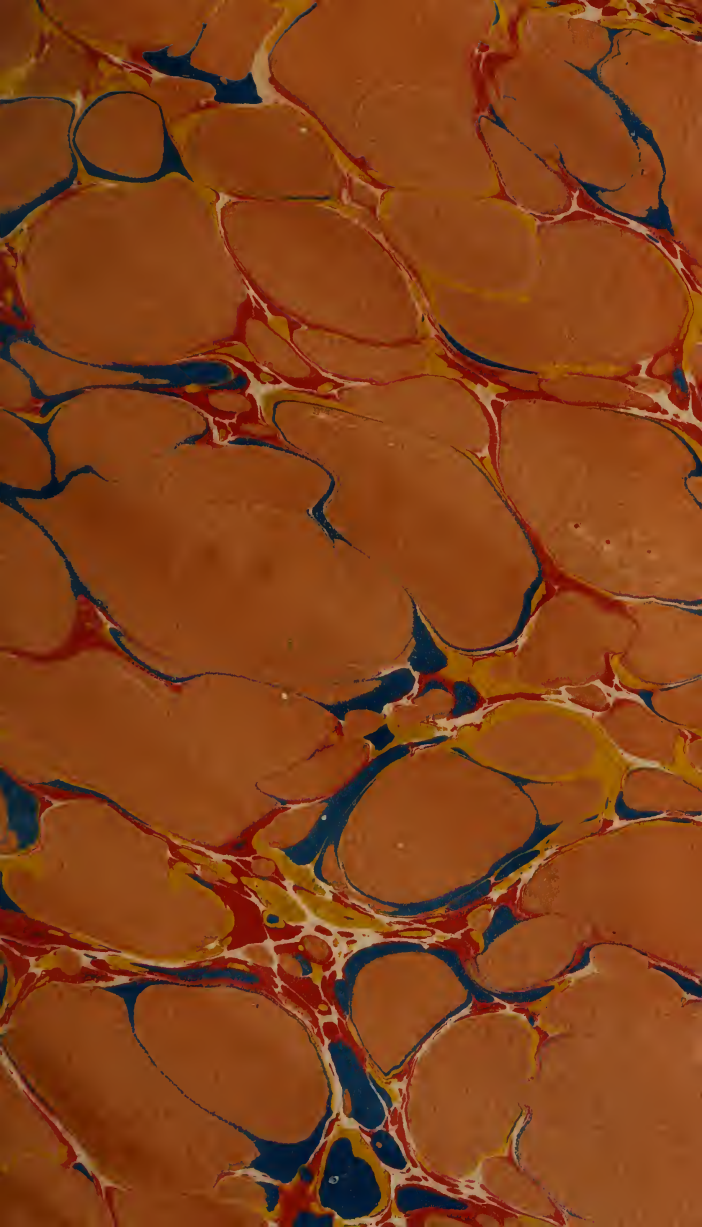



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HUSBAND HUNTING;

OR, THE

MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS.

A TALE OF FASHIONABLE LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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MUSKIE HUNTING

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HUSBAND HUNTING;

OR,

THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS

CHAPTER I.

Of comfort no man speak ;
Let's talk of graves, of worms, of epitaphs ;
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth ;
Let's choose executors, and talk of wills.

Shakspeare.

THE story of the locket was simply told. It had been found by the peasant in the cottage to which Velasquez had been carried by Vaughan. Leonora had kept it, in the idea that it belonged to the stranger to whom her husband was indebted for the preservation of his life ; and as a means of discovering one

who had rendered a service so worthy of all her gratitude. Vaughan's slight and accidental mention, drawn from him by the strong excitement of Leonora's despair, had thrown sudden light upon the transaction. The only proof wanting was his acknowledgment of the locket. She trembled as she drew it from her bosom; but her doubts were delightfully closed by his recognising this little memorial of his "ladye love."

Leonora flew to her husband with the intelligence. His haughty spirit resisted reconciliation, though it could not resist evidence; and the result was the singular meeting in which he satisfied, however strangely, at once his sense of injury and of gratitude. But the Spaniard's nature was generous; his love for Leonora was ardent; she taught

it to be confiding, and Vaughan, without an effort or an explanation, was gradually adopted into the complete intimacy of the Spanish noble.

All now seemed to be auspicious; life shone around him. He wanted but a letter from his fair mistress, to place him beyond the reach of human anxiety.

When her letter at length reached his hands, it found him in that light and joyous frame of mind which appeared anything but the prelude to the coming ill. He tore it open. The impulse of surprise and joy occasioned by tidings of the General's arrival at first superseded every other feeling. "Now then all is safe and happy; we have had our evil day; but the storm has passed harmlessly over our heads. Lovely Catherine, there was surely a similarity in our destinies, which decreed that, toge-

ther or apart, Fortune should dispense her frowns and smiles to both alike."

A second perusal, it may well be supposed, tended materially to moderate his transports. He could not fail to detect a singular and studied coldness in her expressions, completely foreign to her usual style. And at such a moment, too. In what light could he view the unwelcome change? Thus wrote Catherine: "My father has returned at last, prosperous as I could desire, kind and indulgent as I could wish him." Murmured Vaughan, "Prosperous as I could desire him! No congratulation—no kind word on this approach to what was once a *mutual* hope—no remembrance of the faith she pledged. Had our situations been reversed, is it thus that I should have written? Let us read on: 'I am no longer the orphan you

left behind.' How am I to understand this intimation? That she is now an *heiress*,—that I must aspire to her no more."

He dropped the paper, and in feverish bitterness of soul spoke as if she had been standing before him. "Catherine, there was a time, when scarcely daring to anticipate the event which has now come, you grieved that you had nothing but empty professions to bestow. Your father's return was to be the proof of your faith and fondness. 'Then,' you exclaimed, in a voice that was made to deceive,—'then may we lift up our heads, and defy this heartless world.' But you have learnt to follow the example of that heartless world; that young heart was not formed to withstand prosperity. What promises were not in the very silence of your lips!

What love and truth strong as life or death were not in those eyes, that then seemed to have brought their light from Heaven! And, after all, to send this cold, heartless, haughty, insulting letter."

He caught it from the ground, tore it into a thousand pieces, and stood at his window, watching with a lover's vindictiveness the fragments as they fluttered through the air, and fell in the stream that floated, coloured with the richness of the setting sun, beneath his feet.

What was to be done? What reply could he send? or should he send none? To remind her of claims, which she appeared intentionally to have forgotten, was not to be thought of. There remained but one course to pursue,—to utterly renounce, disdain, and forget her for ever.

He flung himself into a chair, and prepared to write. The letter was to be cool and contemptuous, but utterly decisive. He sought for her's as a model; it was gone. He glanced from the window; and, to his surprise, saw its innumerable shreds coursing each other through the air like a swarm of butterflies, or trampled under the clouted shoon of the muleteers. He regretted that he had disposed of it so hastily. He sat down again to write; but her image rose before him in sweetness and beauty. He paused. "She might be dazzled and bewildered, but not wholly estranged; misled and overruled for a time, but not faithless and lost to him for ever." He tore his paper, and determined to await the explanation of time.

Having adopted this resolution, it may well be supposed that he looked for English letters with anxiety; but day after day, and week after week, passed on without the only letter that could set him at ease.

From his mother he heard occasionally; but she had left London almost immediately after General Greville's arrival, and her intercourse with the family had necessarily relaxed. Besides, he had never made her his confidant, and could not expect that she should enter on the subject which interested him with such deep and absorbing passion. Catherine's name was seldom and but slightly mentioned by her, and then not in a way calculated to give any clue to the mystery which perplexed him; the world was be-

ginning to look like a bauble in his clouded eyes.

The gratitude of Velasquez had procured him several high and valuable introductions; and, as far as outward gratification could be supposed to contribute to his happiness, he would have been pronounced not justified in complaining; but he was disappointed and darkened in soul. Even the grand struggle, in which all Europe was just then involved, had lost its interest for him.

As he one day walked thoughtfully along by the parade of one of the regiments, he perceived the officers all with countenances of peculiar animation, conversing apparently on some remarkable news; he turned away. "I shall know all in good time," said he to himself

coldly, reluctant to enter into any discussion, and he passed on. He was suddenly followed by a young officer, one of his intimate friends, with "Where are you flying to, Vaughan? Glorious tidings! nothing less than that Napoleon has surrendered at Fontainebleau. Then comes peace,—then the route homewards,—and so for merry England again."

"How unfortunate!" said Vaughan, his thoughts instantly reverting to the dubious reception which awaited him at home.

The officer stared, and burst into laughter. "Mad," said he. "Perhaps so," said Vaughan; "I shall soon know my fate." "Know your fate!" said the officer hastily. "Why, we shall all know our fates before long. I am tired

of forced marches and sleepless nights, sallow nuns, vesper bells, confoundedly hot days, and the eternal Bolero. England for ever!" "Well, then," said Vaughan, with a cold smile, "let come what will come. England for ever!"

CHAPTER II.

Here's royal feasting! Here are lamps and flowers!
So thickly twined, that you would swear the buds
Grew from those starry cressets, and the flames
Were but their lighted perfume. Here are roofs!
Old Titian's hand has laid his purple brush
Among those clouds. There Danae lies,
Lifting her blue and wonder-gazing glance
To the gold-dropping Heavens! Arcadia's here,
With all its crystal founts, blue mountain tops,
Deep meads, and bowers where winter dares not come
To kill the roses. There's a glorious shape,
Goddess or nymph, that sits beneath the trees,
Making them full of beauty; there one bends,
Listening the murmuring music of yon stream,
That glitters in the crimson set o' the sun!"

Phineas Webb.

A FEW days subsequent, there was a grand fête given at the villa of Velasquez, in honour of the general triumph of Spain and Europe, to which Vaughan, along with a crowd of his brother offi-

cers, was invited. On such an occasion, he would not absent himself; but he wandered through the splendid apartments like a living spectre, a joyless figure, which turned the same gaze on all. There was mirth and revelry in those proud halls that evening. Every tongue was loud with animation; but he spoke to no one. All his countrymen exhibited the natural joy of the prospect of returning to kind friends and true. To him alone the future was dark; and he felt that "welcome," unless pronounced by the lips he loved, would be almost a pang.

The band struck up some triumphant national airs. The hall resounded with acclamations. Vaughan turned moodily away; he felt how coldly public triumph stirs the mind, when private feelings have been keenly wrung. They drank

to the health of the British heroes; and yet he felt as if all around was but falsehood and delusion. He turned into an ante-chamber, which, to his relief, he found vacant, and stood for some moments leaning his head and arm against one of the marble pilasters, like one exhausted by bodily fatigue.

The sound of footsteps roused him. The Donna Leonora had approached him unperceived. “Why, Senor Vaughan, why this dejection? Do you alone refuse to share our fête? Has the word ‘country’ no charm in your ear? Oh! when my period of exile was at an end, with what a bounding heart I prepared for my return, though it was to a land of desolation, and you are returning to one of peace and plenty, and to the smiles of your fair lady. Ah! you see Don Ferdinand has betrayed you, Senor. Trust

me, she will take it but an ill compliment if you appear before her with that clouded brow."

"Spare your raillery, Donna Leonora. The smile of which you speak will not meet me; enjoyment, friendship, are to me henceforth but a name. I begin almost to look upon the world but as one vast desert, in which my own country appears the most barren spot of all."

"Come, Senor, I must not hear such language; you are infected with some jealous mania;" (and she blushed as she pronounced the word). "Yes, men of every age and country, I see, are all alike; all discontent, all suspicion,—yet infinitely easy to be imposed upon after all. You are too impetuous. Permit me to undertake this unknown lady's defence. I know too well

the misery of being the object of unfounded suspicion, not to pity one who is probably thus circumstanced." She spoke in a graver tone. "Senor, are you afraid to state your case fairly before me? Women are the fittest judges of each other's actions. Your sex know nothing of the nameless scruples, the secret springs, which sometimes actuate us. Be candid."

"So much kindness well deserves to be trusted. There is nothing new in my story. It is a tale five thousand years old. Young heads made giddy with sudden prosperity—early promises set at nought, and the heart that would have loved till death insulted and forgotten." He gave a slight sketch of his story.

"All women have a small portion of coquetry in their character. I know not

this lady ; but may she not have had only a little more than her share?"

Vaughan disclaimed the idea with a vehemence that made the Donna smile. "No one could be freer from such a failing. She was superior to artifice." "Ay, Senor Vaughan, you would not be her lover, if you did not even now think her little short of perfection. Yes, I see you are ready to kiss the hand that dealt the blow ; but let us, for argument's sake, suppose her to possess some female foibles ; what is the language that your own immortal poet puts into the lips of one of his most fond and faithful heroines? Your Shakspeare is one of my favourite bards;" and she repeated, with a strong foreign accent, but much grace and *naïveté* of expression, Juliet's address to Romeo:

Yet, if thou think'st I am too quickly won,
I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo ; but else, not for the world."

“No,” said Vaughan, still more earnestly; “she is above all trifling, and at all events would never have employed it at such a time, when her coldness was liable to a so much deeper interpretation.”

“May she not have addressed you in a moment of irritation? Can you recollect no letter unanswered?—no careless expression? May not this father of whom she speaks have enforced her obedience by some tyrannical command? Is there no such thing as an obstinate and imperious parent? May not this letter have been looked over, even dictated by himself? If so, I can fancy the anguish with which it was penned, the tears which were shed over it. I interpret but ill, if her heart is not yours.”

“Would to heaven it were,” exclaimed Vaughan. “A light breaks in upon me. I will see her, she may have been deceived—I may have been ma-

ligned—her own words shall decide. We shall be immediately under orders for England: then, Catherine,” said he, almost in soliloquy, “all shall be known at once, and for ever.”

Leonora had stood watching the varying expression of his features; then turning away as if not to obtrude upon his feelings, that were evidently in high agitation, she walked into an adjoining saloon. Vaughan, recovering from the meditations which had shaken him, perceived her absence, and followed to thank her. He found her contemplating a magnificent Italian picture. She looked round on his entrance, and with a smile of celestial rosy red, love’s proper hue, congratulated him on what she entitled, “the most fortunate of all his battles,” the conflict with his own pained spirit. “I thought of you and your

English lady, Senor," said she, "as I was looking at that picture. Those two figures, brilliant as they are, were my ancestors; the lady, with all that profusion of gold and jewels, and that still richer profusion of raven locks and dazzling glances, had been nearly the cause of that kneeling cavalier's laying himself and all his honours at the bottom of the Grand Canal of Venice. They were both great people, and extravagant lovers in their time, and jealousy had nearly sent them both out of the world before their marriage. So you see," said she, laughing, "the narrow escape I had of being forbidden to shine among the future ornaments of Spain."

Vaughan was animated in his praise of the picture, which was a magnificent work, full of Titianesque splendour, and

lavish beauty. A large chandelier in the centre of the apartment threw its full light upon the figures, and they looked radiant with chivalric pomp and loveliness. "But," said Leonora, "one example is worth a thousand morals, and you shall have the story of these lovers. Yet I have an instinctive aversion to long stories, and, above all, to stories of love."—"But, of your ancestors," said Vaughan, anxious to hear. "Yes, and *for my friend!*" said she, with a smile, and a graceful inclination of her fine form.

At some distance from the picture, and shaded by a canopy which shut out the descending blaze of the chandelier, was an alcove which looked into the extensive gardens. The casement was open, and the rising sweetness of innumerable flowers, softened and cool with

the night dews, breathed deliciously into the apartment. The sound of the music in the concert-room was just heard; and Leonora, gazing for a moment on the picture, as if to gather inspiration from its glowing beauty, and with a low, sweet voice, which mingled well with the music on the air, began the story of Montalto and Adriana.

“ THE Carnival of the year 1615 was the most brilliant that had been ever known in Venice. The city was singularly crowded with foreign and Italian nobles, vying with each other in every kind of illustrious extravagance. Artists of the most distinguished rank flocked from all parts of the Continent. Venice was a continued tumult of pomp. But the proud and magnifi-

cent Venetian Lords, then masters of the commerce of the world, outshone them all. The season, too, had been remarkably auspicious ; and the evenings, which are generally chill so early in the year, were as mild as summer : the whole multitude of Venice covered the Lagunes in their boats for half the night, and the waters were illuminated with perpetual lights and fireworks, and the air was filled with the harmony of voices and instruments without number. The Venetian poets still celebrate that memorable year.

“ On the last day of the Carnival, the public delight rose into its wildest extravagance ; for in the morning despatches were received from the Doge Mancini, who had sailed some days before with reinforcements to the army in the Ferrarese, announcing that he had

utterly defeated the troops of Mantua, and that the prisoners would arrive on that evening.

“ Venice, once the great queen of the Mediterranean, the conqueror of Constantinople, the golden Chersonesus, and the Isles of Greece, paramount in the sea that bathed the shores of all that was lovely, powerful, or renowned in the European world, had fallen from her martial supremacy. But she mingled with her ancient trophies of war the not less glorious trophies of civilization. Her people were the most polished; her poets and painters the most brilliant and sublime; and her merchants the richest of the age. Struggles with the Italian States had gradually restricted her territory, and diminished her military strength. But Venice was still the place of noble ambition, the old heroic

remembrances of her triumphal days were the pride and the joy of her luxurious people; and the spirit of knight-hood still burned in bosoms that seemed devoted to the splendid and relaxing indulgences of boundless wealth and unresisted power.

“As evening fell, the Carnival was forgotten, and thousands and ten thousands lined every canal that looked towards the Terra Firma. The guard of the Council of State were drawn up in front of the palace. A triumphal arch was raised before St. Mark's, under which the Doge, his troops, and his prisoners, were to pass. The Adriatic was covered with boats beyond all number; the great nobles, the military chieftains, the Levant merchants, were all abroad in their barges covered with every rich

emblem and device that Italian fancy and opulence could crowd upon them.

“ While all were in this high-raised and happy expectancy, a low sound like that of remote thunder was heard in the direction of Fusina, and the gondoliers began to prepare for a storm, and run to the canals. The sun had now gone down, and the northern shore was only a dusky line upon the water; when a pale light rose slowly, spread over the horizon, then disappeared, then rose, and sank again. The sound advanced, and now seemed human shouts, and the roar of cannon. At last one broad and fierce sheet of flame was seen to spring from the shore, it quivered for an instant over the whole sea, showing in a livid light every flag, and countenance, and roof

of the city. In the next instant all was darkness, followed by a peal that almost burst the ear.

“The multitude were confounded, and thought that some new volcano had burst out in the Adriatic. But with the dying away of the sound, confidence returned, the light was taken as a signal, that the Doge with his army had arrived on the opposite shore, the shouts were the acclamations of the troops, and the multitude now pressed forwards to welcome their invincible chieftain, loaded with the spoils of Mantua.

“The sun went down on this evening with a grandeur and loveliness of colouring that overwhelmed even the Venetian eye. The clouds assumed innumerable forms under the light breeze that played above, while the whole sweep of sea below lay in the most un-

ruffled stillness. The quick spirit of the people, always picturesque, found omens and resemblances of all lovely and visionary things in the aspect of the heavens. As the clouds moved down in long majestic trains to the west, lighted with every tint of the rainbow by the descending sun ; some saw the march of armies to storm some glorious capital ; then as the vapours scattered and broke up into fragments that, hovering over the west, turned it every moment to green, gold, and purple, they imaged the procession of all the birds to the nest where the phoenix made its sepulchre of perfume and fire ; then, as the scattered mists again formed into shape, they fancied a train of celestial beings floating on the wing, angel troop by troop, to that place too bright for human eyes, which the sun lighted up in the

depths of Heaven ; and the mingled and delicious music that filled the air from the gondolas, now dimly seen in the twilight, was not unlike what the mind dreams of as the harpings of beings above this sphere.

CHAPTER III.

Then get thee gone and dig thy grave thyself,
Only compound thee with forgotten dust,
Pluck down thy officers, break thy decrees,
For now a truce is come to mock at form.
Down royal state, all ye sage counsellors, hence.
Shakspeare.

“ THE crowd of gondolas were now rapidly approaching the shore, when a large galley with torches at the poop and stern, and lamps hung on the masts and sails, came rushing from the mouth of the Brenta. A simultaneous shout of applause rose from all the gondolas, but the galley was alone; as she swept down, it was observed that her sails were torn, and her pennant half burnt.

The lamps on her rigging rapidly shifted their places, and those signals were followed by similar changes of the signal lamps on the tower roof of the Ducal palace. Armed men were now seen crowding her decks; some obviously wounded, and some in attitudes of strong dispute. The torches threw a red and melancholy glare over the waters, and the galley swept her way among the barges, that scattered and fled before her towering height and wild speed, like fiery sparkles. To the anxious inquiry of the people, no answer was given; but as she reached the entrance of the canal, in front of the Ducal palace, the great bell of St. Marks was heard tolling, a sign that some great disaster had befallen the state. The doubt was soon cleared up by the coming of other galleys, shattered and full

of wounded and dying men. The Venetians had been defeated with great slaughter. On the first advance of the Doge with his reinforcement, the troops of the Duke of Mantua had, after a short contest, retreated with the loss of baggage and prisoners, and the Doge had pursued. An unexpected army, under the command of a foreign general, had fallen upon him during his march; the Venetians had given way, and their broken troops were hunted to the shore. The shouts heard early in the evening were the shouts of that desperate struggle in which they were engaged down to the water's edge. The fire that ran along the land was from the cannon and matchlocks; and the great sheet of flame the blowing up of the citadel of Fusina.

“During that night no eye was closed

in Venice; the grand council was busied in deliberation; the bell of St. Mark's tolled ominously; messengers were sent off continually to the different points of the land; every glance cast towards Fusina showed some galley hurrying across the waters with its freight of death and defeat, and still the pallid light played along the shores of the Brenta, and, at intervals, the heavy sound of artillery was heard. At day-break one solitary vessel was seen still lingering on the coast; boats were frequently passing from her to the sands, notwithstanding the fire of matchlocks which absolutely rained upon her. It was conceived that she had struck upon some shoal, and two of the best equipped galleys in the canal were ordered off to her assistance. But before they had weighed anchor, she was observed

to stand clear of the shore, and giving a broadside which crushed and utterly silenced the enemy's fire, she steered directly, with all colours flying, for Venice.

“ The multitude received her as she came with mingled mourning and acclamation. Her sides and rigging bore marks of a desperate struggle, and the thick mass of pale and lacerated figures that lay upon her poop, or hung their dejected heads over her lofty side, showed that she had gallantly waited to collect the remnants of the battle, and save the last wounded from the cruelty of the enemy. On her touching the steps in front of the Ducal Palace, an officer sprang from on board, and demanded to be led to the Grand Council. They were still sitting. A wounded man was carried out of the vessel after him,

whom he ordered to be held in readiness at his call. The populace made way for him, with a homage inspired by his appearance.

“ He was in the prime of manhood ; a wound on his forehead hastily bound up, and still dropping blood, did not lessen the admiration with which they gazed on his noble and Roman countenance, his flashing eye, or the statue-like proportion, and nervous activity of his figure. Long service on sea and land had made him almost a stranger in Venice ; he had fought against the Turk, and the Algerine, and had been now for some years employed in the war of the Republic against the Duke of Mantua and the Pope. A train of gallant actions had raised the Count de Montalto to the command of a detached body of troops, whose name was a terror to the enemy ;

in the late battles, the flight of the Doge, and the death of the second in command, who had been transfixed by the lance of a Spanish Knight, placed him at the head of the defeated army, and it was owing to his valour, talent, and chivalrous humanity, that the retreat was secured, and the last of the wounded were brought off from the shore.

“Morning had dawned upon the Grand Council, and found them still deeply occupied with the formidable business of the night. The Doge, Mancini, had already, in a long and pathetic harangue, related the circumstances of the unexpected catastrophe which had overwhelmed the Venetian army; and had given his opinion, bitter to the pride of the great republic, that they should send ambassadors to treat for peace. The

moment was terrible. The blood of the chief Venetian families had been shed in that disastrous battle; the last army of the state been driven with ruinous loss and shame out of their last territorial possession. The palaces of the nobles on the Brenta were in the power of their plunderers; a day might bring the whole hostile armament to Venice; and the queen of cities, with all her glories, might be extinguished in her own slaughter.

“ The question was put, and the council had risen to give their ballots, when an officer arrived, announcing the demand of the Count de Montalto for an immediate audience. It was granted from the emergency of the time. He entered, accompanied by some of his captains, and his presence excited an involuntary murmur of admiration. The

first cessation of effort had left him pale; and when he took off his crimson cap, of which the emerald band was won by him from the neck of a Moorish Bey, and the heron plume from the turban of an Arab Emir, and bowed before this august tribunal, he seemed fainting with fatigue and loss of blood. His crimson cloak covered a wounded arm, and the ray that now shot down from between the pillars, fell on his tunic, and shewed the trace of blood on the gold-embroidered cuirass within.

CHAPTER IV.

He's traitorous, there are stains upon his palm :
Gold has been there. Pluck off his ermine, Sirs,
You'll find the dagger in't, that was to strike
The state i' the heart. Mind not his hoary hairs.
There's burning passion, hot Ambition's thirst,
Pale Envy's gall, Revenge's poisonous blood,
Hid in that Ancient, harnessed as he stands,
In armour for your Venice. Down with him !

Phineas Webb.

“ ON BEING questioned on his business with the council, he advanced to the foot of the table, and, in a firm tone, pronounced the words, ‘ I come to accuse a traitor among you of his treason.’ The surprise was indescribable; every man looked at his neighbour in astonishment. But the feeling of the offence was stronger than the suspicion; and Montalto was ordered to be seized, to

answer for his insult. ‘Hold!’ said he, turning to the guard; ‘I have not yet named the traitor!’ There was a pause, and all eyes were fixed on the lofty and composed countenance of the accuser. ‘Name the traitor if thou darest, if thou canst,’ said the Doge, in a low but distinct tone. ‘Mancini!’ was the answer. The Doge, who had sat with his eyes fixed on the Count, at the word sprung upright from his throne, as if he had been pierced by an arrow, stood for a moment in unconsciousness, and then sank feebly into his seat again.

“The cry for the accuser’s seizure was now universal; but his bold voice was heard through all. ‘The Venetian troops,’ said he, ‘have shed their blood and tarnished their honour; but it was through treachery. The enemy were already beaten, when your Doge led

his army into a defile where no valour could save them. I saw gallant squadrons crushed by rocks and trees without the sight of an enemy. I saw their chieftain the last to enter the field, and the first to fly.'

"Mancini rose to contradict the charge. 'It is the business of a traitor not to ask for justice, but to solicit mercy,' pronounced Montalto, in an appalling tone. 'But if you want proofs, here take them;' and he drew a packet from his bosom. 'Here is the secret correspondence of your Doge with the Duke of Mantua and the Pope. Here,' and he flung one of the papers on the table, — 'here is the secret treaty by which the Doge Mancini binds himself to deliver up the army of the state to the enemy. Here,' drawing out another, 'is the secret treaty by which Sforza, Prince

of Mantua, and that holy fox, Innocent of Rome, pledge themselves to give the Doge Mancini the full investiture and sovereignty of Venice and her isles on his betraying the army and abandoning your provinces on the *terra firma*.’

“The confusion in the council had now risen to its height. No suspicion had hitherto dared to breathe against the Doge. Mancini had risen through all the ranks of public office; he had distinguished himself in successive wars as a daring, prompt, and dextrous leader; in office he had been remarkable for the vigilance and sternness of its execution. In the government and the council he was sagacious and splendid, eloquent and bold. On this terrible emergency he was not wanting to himself. He laughed the charges to scorn; he showed the strong improbability of their truth;

he descanted on the daring and desperate subtlety which had made a tool of the unsuspecting soldier before them. He asked, what honour could be expected for his gray hairs higher than that which encircled them in the ducal coronet; what room was there for ambition in a mind that must so soon be closed upon the world? what frantic passion for dominion in a bosom that must so soon have all its territory in the narrowness of a grave? or for whom could he be ambitious, if not for himself? He once had a son; that son had exiled himself by his vices,—had been unheard of for years, and was now probably lying among the unburied dead of some remote field or unfathomed ocean.

“The elements of oratory had been nobly combined in this man. Stung by the feeling of the hour, he rose into a

magnificence of thought and language that held the council as in a chain of enchantment. The burden of years was thrown off, and he stood before them in the freshness and vigour of youth ; his voice rich, deep, and solemn, at one while melted them with a recital of his services and sufferings in the cause of their common country ; then rising into full volume, it thundered out resistless indignation on the gloomy artifice and subtle, satanic guilt, that rejoiced to seek its prey among the noble in rank and nature, the pure, the aged, the faithful servants of the state, and the generous, long-tried, and stainless friends of mankind.

“ An universal shout of applause burst from that grave assembly ; and Montalto, as the acclamation subsided, was contemptuously called on for further accusa-

tion, if he had it to offer. He had listened with equal wonder and sorrow to the Doge's eloquence; but his heroic patriotism was not to be captivated or shaken. 'My Lord Doge,' said he, 'I feel for the noble talents which a desperate ambition has rendered hazardous to the State. I have other proofs. Let the Doge give up his dignity, and retire from Venice, and my lips shall be sealed.' The Council turned their gaze on Mancini. The old man, exhausted by his own energy, seemed scarcely to have heard the words. They were repeated. He stood up at once, and stripping the robe from his breast, said, with a glance of fiery contempt round the hall, 'If ye want my life, strike here. But while there is blood in these veins, never will I give up my honour. Am I not your

prince? Are you all turned traitors? Begone to your homes. I dissolve the Council!’ He rose from his throne, and was hastening out of the hall, when Montalto stood before him, leading a figure wrapped in a military cloak. ‘Look here!’ said Montalto, uncovering the head of the stranger. The Doge started back in sudden horror. ‘This is my proof—Pietro, your highness’ private secretary, whom I seized in attempting to make his escape to the enemy; whose hand wrote these papers, and whose evidence now comes forth to convict you of treason to your country!’ Mancini listened with a bitter smile: his lips moved, but no words followed. On a sudden, his frame struggled as with some strange and fierce emotion. He plunged his forehead in his thin and quivering hands, and fell upon the

ground. The officers and Council started back in awe, till a groan, and a gush of blood on the marble pavement awoke them. They raised him; but life was gone; a dagger was found planted in his heart. He had *died a Doge!*

“The intelligence of this self-inflicted justice was rapidly spread, and the people surrounded the Council on their way through the city with prayers and benedictions. The body of the Doge was exposed to public view, and his estates were confiscated. Montalto was almost worshipped as the guardian angel of Venice, and the people and the troops alike demanded his elevation to the ducal throne. But his noble nature was proof against ambition; and in a meeting of the Council he solemnly declined all pretensions to the sovereignty. ‘It is,’ said he, “not wise to choose a sol-

dier, for his nature must be a love of war; nor a merchant, for his wealth may make him shrink from hazard; nor a noble, because he may have prejudices against the people; nor one of the people, because the privileges of the nobles must be sacred! Choose, if you can find such, a stranger and a sage, bold enough to head your armies in this peril of the State, wise enough to guide your councils, and honest enough to desire no power beyond that of the law, and no reward beyond the consciousness of having done his duty.' His speech, delivered with the simplicity of a hero, was followed by a burst of admiration. He was asked to name his choice. 'Justiniani!' was the answer.

"The name was well known to the chief part of the Council; and some of the elder members recollected with

remorse the name of a renowned senator, who after having served the Republic with distinguished honour many years, had been sent by the influence of faction into exile in Dalmatia. The sentence had been revoked not long after ; but the illustrious exile had refused to return, declaring that he felt grateful to the hostility which had compelled him to learn the true enjoyment of life, in domestic happiness, in learned leisure, and the cultivation of the lovely landscape of his Dalmatian valley.

“ ‘ His proud spirit will not stoop to our solicitation,’ was the general sentiment. ‘ Not if you were in prosperity,’ answered Montalto ; ‘ but in peril your request will be irresistible with Justiniani. I have never seen him. I know him only by the knowledge of his he-

roism and his wisdom: I will be your ambassador, and I shall succeed.'

"The commission was instantly conferred upon Montalto, and after making some military arrangements for the defence of Venice in his absence, he steered in the galley of the Doge for Dalmatia.

CHAPTER V.

Chaplets and bowers, rich wines and cooling streams
Wherein the cups are dipt, and gentle gleams
Of valleys kindled by the western sun,
Are sights mine eye doth love to look upon.

Phineas Webb.

“THE galley soon reached the shores of Dalmatia; Montalto and his train mounted on some pompously caparisoned horses that had been sent to meet them on their landing by the Venetian Governor, and set off full speed for the house of Justiniani.

“They rode during the day through the bold and picturesque country formed by the skirts of the hills that shoot down from Croátia to the sea. Evening was

coming on, when they reached the edge of the valley in which their journey was to end. It was one of those secluded spots common among the eastern shores of the Adriatic, a singular combination of the sweetness and magnificence of the mountain landscape; a cataract burst through a chasm of the blue hills that formed its rampart against the north, and groves of thick and vivid foliage skirted the heights and the stream.

“ They gave the reins to their horses, and let them choose their way down through the fragments of marble and tufts of luxuriant vegetation that filled the ravine. As they descended, the wildness of the mountain-range passed away, and they found themselves in the midst of cultivation, that grew continually more profuse and splendid.

“ The bold Venetians lingered with the delight of men bewitched by the new luxuries of the landscape. The spirit of the time fell still more deeply upon Montalto, and he involuntarily contrasted the happiness of a life passed in those shades of fresh and quiet loveliness, with the rude trials and fierce disturbances of the life of state and war.

“ But a sudden gush of fragrance awoke him as he turned from a deep path by the river's side into the open air; and he saw the dwelling of the future Doge. The country near Spalatro had been a favourite retreat of the opulent Romans since the residence of their philosophic emperor, and the taste of those masters of the world seemed still to linger in the soil. Montalto's eye had been caught, as he rode along, by fragments of architecture in the exquisite

style that Dioclesian revived ; and he now saw before him a palace that might have been built in the happiest hour of Grecian elegance.

“ Justiniani received his distinguished guest with the lofty etiquette of a man accustomed to the ceremonial of courts and senates. He still retained the establishment of a Venetian Lord, some of the officers who had served with him in his earlier triumphs were still attached to his household, and his domestics were all men who had borne arms under his command ; it was a household of old and gallant hearts, and it had the habitual pomp of the palace of a great military chieftain. The master of this house of high recollections, was a stately figure, bowed by his years, his hair white as snow, but his eye full of the fire of manhood, and his step firm and martial:

“ Montalto read his commission from the senate. It was listened to with the most profound attention, but without an answering word. He looked upon the vigorous and penetrating countenance of the old chieftain for an answer; but the expression there was of the same proud and imperturbable tranquillity. He felt an embarrassment mingled with reverence, like one compelled to consult a reluctant Oracle.

“ At length he demanded an answer. ‘ Not to-night, Count de Montalto,’ was the reply. ‘ The senate must not be treated with the disrespect of a sudden resolve. You will do us the honour to accept of our hospitality for this night.’ Montalto urged the necessity of his return, but the old man was immovable; and the Count ordered his attendants to dismount, and partake of

the entertainment which was provided for them with princely hospitality in the great hall.

“ A banquet was served up for Justiniani and his guest, and they gradually grew more animated. ‘ Count,’ said the old chieftain, ‘ I have been long anxious for this interview, for I have long known you by fame. We have heard from a brigantine, commanded by one of my old friends, something of what the Sforzas have been doing. Forty years ago they dared not have lifted a spear in all Italy. We had chased the father of the family into the Apennines, and there kept him among the wolves and wild boars, the natural companions of the robber, for a more thorough bandit did not live from Milan to Naples. But things are altered now.’

“ ‘ Yes,’ said Montalto, ‘ Sforza now

wears a diadem, and claims to be our master. We have force enough in Venice to pluck every jewel from his crown; but he makes a subtle use of his treasury, and there are gondolas in the Laguna that, if I do not deeply mistake, carry other freights than gallant cavaliers and bewitching signoras. Mancini was but *one* of the fallen.'

" ' I knew him well,' interrupted Justiniani, with a flashing eye. ' A great production of nature, but mad with ambition. He was my most trusted friend. I raised him step by step to eminence. His soul was a mixture of grandeur and perfidy. To be Doge, he was a traitor to me; to be more than Doge, he was a traitor to Venice; once King of Venice, he would have betrayed mankind to be sovereign of Italy. But he was a great being, full of magni-

ficent conceptions, and with magnificent powers for their execution. But he is fallen; tell me how he died.'

"Montalto briefly narrated the event; his hearer's countenance rapidly lost its commanding expression; he at length wrapped it in his ample cloak, and wept; Montalto respected this noble sorrow, and felt doubled homage for the grandeur of spirit that could thus forget its injuries.

"A sound of music was heard; Justiniani raised his head. 'Those,' said he, 'are some of my hunters returning from the hills. We live wildly here, Count, and have only the simple pleasures of the forest. Let us order our horses, and meet my friends on their return.'

"The evening was lovely, and all the lustre of the southern landscape was deepened by a sun that sank with un-

usual radiance among the clouds. The train passed up the mountain that overhangs Spalatro, and Montalto gazed with Italian enthusiasm on the glorious ruins spreading out below—the palace of Dioclesian, bathed in the violet-coloured mists of the evening, and lighted by strong bursts of sun-light through the openings of the mountain-range.

“ To Montalto they looked like the visionary palace of the Genius of Rome in her splendour. To Justiniani they assumed a graver cast; ‘ There,’ said he, ‘ is the very type of human ambition. A mixture of pomp and decay—the house of pride turned into the monument of emptiness—the bones of the mighty master buried in the dust of his throne; all to furnish a passing gaze, and a passing moral to the stranger, and

all to be soon covered in one cloud of night and oblivion.'

“ The hunters now came bounding down a vast ravine, wooded to the brow ; the horns flourished as they approached, and the sound spread in rich and softening echoes among the hills. Montalto's vivid spirit was delighted with the bearing of this gallant troop ; but his eye was soon more deeply captivated by the advance of a train on horseback issuing from one of the avenues of the palace. It was composed entirely of females ; they rode the beautiful and spirited horses of the country, richly caparisoned, and the pageant ascending slowly into the light through the grove that covered the side of the mountain, seemed like a brilliant cloud rising from the earth to meet the sun.

“ Justiniani spurred his horse to meet them, and introduced the female who rode at their head to Montalto as his daughter. The young soldier had never seen a creature so lovely; and, as they returned to the plain, he listened with a spell-bound ear to the discourse sustained between Justiniani and the fair Adriana. It was on the common topics of the country; an accidental overflow of a stream which had swept away some peasant cottages, the arrival of a troop of pilgrims from Palestine in the neighbouring hamlet with relics, the rumour of a Moorish felucca having been seen from one of the towers on the coast, and the march of a body of peasantry to repel the pirates.

“ Nothing could be less interesting to the ear of a stranger; but the silver tones of Adriana’s voice, her sparkling

eye, and her graceful animation, made the deliberations of camps and senates trivial in comparison to Montalto's ear; and, on his retiring at night to his chamber, he began seriously to question himself whether it was allowable for a soldier and an envoy to commit the folly of falling in love.

“His sleep was invaded by dreams restless and strange, but without pain; and he rose at day-break with a frame refreshed, and a mind soothed by gentle recollections. The breath of morning came round him with living fragrance, and he gazed long upon a landscape, assuming at every instant some new shape of beauty. The sound of voices below awoke him; he saw Justiniani and Adriana passing down the valley, and followed them through an absolute wilderness of colour

and perfume ; plants of every climate and every brilliancy of hue covering the sides of the valley with a luxuriance that looked like the various and spontaneous richness of an evening sky.

“ ‘ I can now give you your answer,’ said Justiniani, smiling ; ‘ last night, when you arrived, my best figures of speech were gone to rest ; my old friends, the fields and the mountains, had lost their persuasion. But look round you now, Signor, and tell me what is there in coronets or helmets that ought to overpower the pleading of what we now see round us.’

“ ‘ These flowers, my father,’ said Adriana, in a suppressed voice, ‘ are no courtiers,—they will never betray you ; and these mountains will be guards that will never desert their lord.’

“ Justiniani pressed her hand. Then turning to Montalto, whose spirit was absorbed by all that he had seen and heard; ‘Count,’ said he, ‘when the fickle Venetians shall be no more like their own sea, the smoothest and the most treacherous of all things, then let me trust them. You are young, bold, distinguished; while the republic has you, she can want neither counsellor nor soldier; and when you shall have no want of her, come here among us, and despise the emptiness of popular fame, in the presence of the solid and simple happiness of nature.’

“ Montalto remonstrated; he described with the vigour of conviction the hazards of Venice, and the strong necessity of placing at the head of her affairs a man whose eminence would at

once extinguish all rivalry among the nobles, and restore the confidence of the people.

“ Adriana had, almost for the first time, looked upon the noble Venetian in the course of this remonstrance. He was no habitual orator, but his sincerity and the fervour of his feelings gave his words a natural eloquence. As he talked of the campaign, the chivalric gallantry of the Venetian troops, circumvented and wasted away by the perfidy of their general, and their last desperate stand as they rallied round the banner of the *winged lion* on the shore of Fusina, and looking to their own glorious city fought with the untameable valour of heroes resolved not to return with shame;—his voice involuntarily swelled, his fine form dilated with sudden energy, and

his bronzed cheek grew crimson with the glow of patriotism and soldiership. Justiniani gazed on him with the generous admiration of one lofty mind for another, and saw before him a long career of renown. Adriana gazed too, but it was with a sentiment strangely mixed of delight and pain. She had never before seen a being that so much realized the pictures of her solitary hours, when she sat revolving the illustrious days of antiquity. She could have thought that she was looking upon another Alcibiades, with all his beauty, but without his weakness, made to command armies, and wield senates, and lead the hearts of women in his chain of gold and flowers. But when she heard him talk of the perils of the troops, and the crisis at hand, her admiration was forgotten in

the sudden thought, how soon some trivial chance of war might make that perfect and splendid being but as dust and ashes. She turned away with a pang of heart, and could listen no more.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh Love, what art thou? April smiles and tears;
Dreams, waking follies, idler hopes, and fears;
Joys, bitter sorrows; of what art thou made?
Canst thou be substance, where all else is shade?

“MONTALTO prepared to return to Venice; but a new and unaccountable heaviness pressed upon him. In his chamber, during the preparations for his homeward journey, thoughts came over him of the vanity and transient nature of human ambition, of the melancholy glories of war, and of the precariousness of public honours. All around him was in favour of the argument. His noble entertainer enjoyed a happiness not to

be found under the proudest roof in Venice. Montalto looked out upon the landscape, and it lay before him in a dewy and tranquil loveliness that he thought he had not perceived before. He must go through his task, stern as it was; but he made in that hour a secret vow of finding out some nook of the earth that resembled this, if such enchantment was to be found besides; and there turning his sword into a pruning-hook, and sitting under his own vine, and his own fig-tree, till all human joys and anxieties were alike at an end.

“ He was startled by the trumpet that assembled his troop; he heard the trampling of their horses’ hoofs, and their jovial voices as they mustered; never sounds came so dissonant to his ear. The hour had worn away in no undelighted though grave meditation;

and a pilgrim passing down the avenue, with his scolloped hat, and habit brown with the dust of the Holy Land, the only living thing that had till then passed before his eye, had only mingled an abstracted and solitary image with the thick-coming fancies of his perturbed mind.

“ He returned to the saloon, where he had held his conference with Justiniani the night before, and where the ancient statesman and his daughter were waiting to bid him farewell. The parting was one of few words; presents were exchanged; and when Adriana added her's, an amulet which had just arrived from the holy sepulchre, and which had the repute of curing wounds, she gave it with an involuntary sigh, and an inward prayer, that its virtues might be never required.

“ Montalto felt his eyes dazzled as he gazed upon her beauty. The brown profusion of tresses that wreathed under her purple Dalmatian turban; the statue-like grace of her arms visible under the robe looped up with pearls; the marble neck glittering with precious stones; the whole countenance and form, in which even the splendour of her dress seemed but to make a part of the pure and simple superiority of her beauty, reminded him of some of the visionary shapes that had just floated in his dreams. He had seen the most captivating women of the Continent; the grandeur of the Greek expression, the brilliancy of the French, the rich and beaming sensibility of the Italian, but till now his heart had slumbered; it waited, like the image of Prometheus, but a spark from this high source of

magnificent and candid loveliness to light it up into passion and power.

“ He already had his foot in the stirrup, with a silent, proud determination to earn a title to the hand of Adriana; when a trumpet sounded through the wood, and a small troop of horsemen glittered through its windings: they came at full speed, and their leader delivered a sealed packet to Montalto. It was from the senate. It contained the alarming intelligence, that Sforza had collected all the shipping of the Terra Firma, had marched his army to the shore, repulsing the Venetian squadron, and that Venice was in danger of immediate attack; popular commotions had arisen, fomented equally by the partisans of Mancini and the alarms of the populace, and the universal cry was for Justiniani.

“The despatch was put into the hands of the veteran hero. He read it with deep agitation; then turning to his daughter, he said, ‘On leaving my ungrateful country, I made a solemn vow never to return but by her entreaty; she now supplicates. I vowed, before the altar, never to draw my sword for her [but in her day of threatened ruin; she is now in imminent hazard; but I made a third vow, the deepest and dearest of all, never to leave this spot but with your consent; my child.’ Adriana turned away to hide her emotions; she wept, and would not have spoken. Montalto besought an answer. She uttered the single word ‘Go.’ Justiniani clasped her in his arms.

CHAPTER VII.

Lights there ; who struck him, is he wounded deep ?—
This is true blood !——

Fletcher.

“THIS illustrious exile was received with the extravagance of popular feeling, eager to atone for its past ingratitude, and exulting in the assurance of preservation. His galley was met by those of the Senate and the patrician families, and even the distant thunders of the Milanese cannon battering down the bastions of Fusina, increased the general joy by reminding the people of secure vengeance to come.

“Justiniani soon gave proof that retirement had not diminished his great

qualities. At the age of seventy he assumed the sudden activity of youth, reviewed the troops, refitted the arsenals, equipped a fleet, and was on the seas almost before the Milanese had heard of his return. They made some able efforts to retain their superiority. A Genoese fleet appeared in the Adriatic. It was attacked, and dispersed. The conquerors instantly landed their troops in front of the Milanese. Sforza was bold, sagacious, and cruel: he fought with barbarian desperation; but after a contest prolonged into the night, the firing of his camp covered his retreat, and he drew off his broken army to Padua, leaving the country beyond Fusina covered with marks of fierce and ruinous defeat. Montalto had led the vanguard, and eclipsed his former glories. Justiniani had fought on foot, ral-

lied some battalions, and distinguished himself with the ardour of a young soldier.

“ All was now rejoicing in Venice ; the Doge and his general returned in triumph ; and Montalto, honoured with the splendid distinctions of Venetian gratitude, was pronounced by the public voice, and received by the Doge as, the noblest suitor of his fair Adriana.

“ About this time there appeared at Venice in the fêtes given on the public triumph, a young Improvisatore of extraordinary faculties. The waywardness of genius, as well as its vigour, characterized his whole conduct. His mode of life was simple, his manner secluded and strange, yet at times he indulged in extravagant excess, scattered gold among the populace, played in the casinos with the recklessness of an habi-

tual gamester, and then disappeared to his solitude again. He had more than the usual accomplishments of the times, spoke several languages with striking fluency and elegance, was a master of the lute, and sang his own graceful verses with matchless taste and captivation. His story of himself was, that he was of a noble Veronese family ruined by the war, and utterly scattered through the world; that he, a younger son, had determined to wander till his fortunes changed, and he might return without dishonour to the place of his ancestors. He acknowledged that he had assumed a name for the purpose of more complete disguise.

“ The Venetian populace are fond of poetry and music, and the singular powers of this young bard made him an eminent popular favourite. Petrarch himself, if he could have risen from his

mausoleum, with the laurels of the Capitol upon his head, and his inspired harp in his hand, could scarcely have more deeply delighted the enthusiastic multitude. He was followed through the streets by a crowd of gazers ; and often when in the fine evenings of the advancing summer he wandered by the banks of the Grand Canal, or leaned on one of the bridges contemplating the brilliancy of the moving scene below, the waters coloured with the tints of the gorgeous buildings, the boats loaded with the riches of the East, or the fruits of the Terra Firma, and the quays covered with men of all nations, in all their glittering varieties of habit, from China to the Atlantic, the multitude could not be restrained from surrounding and imploring him, in the touching strain of Venetian entreaty, for some display of his powerful

and bewitching genius. He generally repelled them with a lofty disdain, and plunged into darkness and loneliness for days and weeks together. But he sometimes allowed himself to be won, and the hearers then owned that such gifts ought not to be lavished upon common and capricious entreaty.

“His fame had reached the palace, and he made the ornament of some of the brilliant fêtes given by the Count in honour of his approaching marriage with the daughter of Justiniani. Adriana, too high-minded to feign reluctance, and too sensitive to generous and noble qualities not to love the Count Montalto, had accepted his suit; and the ceremony awaited only the final cessation of hostilities with Sforza, whose envoy had already arrived. A sudden calamity clouded this bright

prospect. A grand entertainment had been given to the envoy, on his public reception; it continued till a late hour, and the Doge had retired overcome with the tumult and heat of the festivity. The casement of his chamber was open, and he stood for a moment enjoying the tranquillity of the contrast with that crowded and dazzling splendour which he had left behind, when a pistol was fired into the casement, and he felt himself wounded. His firmness of nerve sustained him; he rushed out into the parterre that lined the shore, to seize the assassin, but no living thing was visible. There was no gondolier on the canal, the moon showed the whole extent of the waters; the assassin must have sunk into the earth, or gone up into the clouds.

“Justiniani tottered back to his cham-

ber, the blood flowed profusely from his side; he felt himself fainting, and with a last effort, he rushed back into the banquet-room, and fell.

CHAPTER VIII.

By many things have many men been tried,
Love, sorrow, riches, madness, folly, pride ;
But Fate, when it insures their deadly fall,
Sends Jealousy, the fiercest fiend of all.

Phineas Webb.

“ THE confusion among the multitude was instant and indescribable. Cries of ‘treason’ were loud, the gates of the palace were closed; the senate were summoned; and the midnight tolling of the bell of St. Mark, so long the signal of public danger, had roused the whole of Venice from its sleep. The citizens and troops poured tumultuously through the streets. For the time Venice had the look of a city taken by storm.

“ Among those who raised the wounded Doge, Montalto was the first and most anxious. He staunched the blood with his scarf, before even the practised skill of the Ducal surgeons could stop its dangerous effusion. But it began to be a matter of surprise that among the crowd that knelt, and prayed, and pressed round the couch of Justiniani, there was one wanting, whom every eye expected yet dreaded to have seen foremost in those offices of duty and love. Adriana was not in the banquet room.

“ A moment before the Doge had appeared among his terrified guests, tottering in like a spectre, pale and covered with blood, she had suddenly left the room. Montalto flew to find her. She was not in the palace. She was sought for through the gardens. The moon was

at the full, and nothing could have escaped the eye under that full splendour. She was not to be seen.

“ As Montalto was returning in despair to the palace, by an intricate and unfrequented path, he heard a rustle in a thicket; he rushed in. A figure in a gondolier's habit sprang out at the opposite side, and plunged into the Lagoon. Montalto sprang after him, but the thicket was entangled, and before he had forced his way through it, there was no trace of the fugitive. A gondola was lying beside the bank, and in it, to his joy and terror, was Adriana, speechless, cold, and apparently dying.

“ His presence of mind did not desert him in this terrible conjuncture. He tried to recover her senses. On her first opening her eyes, she gave almost a scream of joy, and then turned away in

sudden and strange abhorrence. She held a paper in her hand. Montalto read it by the moonlight. It was, in a few words, imploring ‘the Lady Adriana, if she would prevent an atrocious crime levelled against the dearest object of her affections, to give the writer a moment’s interview.’

“Jealousy, the native passion of the south, shot an icy pang through Montalto’s heart. In the lofty sincerity of his nature, he charged Adriana with having forgotten him for another. The charge was answered by tears that would not be denied. ‘No, Montalto,’ said the weeping beauty, ‘if I had not a confidence in you stronger than all that eyes or ears, or man or spirit, could shake, I should at this hour fly you as a murderer!’

“He sprang backwards, gazing on her

in astonishment. But she looked on him with a smile full of such sweet sadness, there was such a faithful, fond dependency in her exquisite form as she bent towards him, that he at once, and more deeply than ever before, felt the conviction, that nothing but death could divide them.

“Adriana’s story was brief. On receiving the note, which left her in doubt whether the danger threatened her father’s or Montalto’s life, she had gone into an inner apartment, where she found the messenger, an attendant in the dress of the Ducal pages. He had detailed a long narrative of conspiracy, which he said had for its object the overthrow of the government, and to her disbelief and horror, Montalto’s usurpation of the throne. On her bursting out into scorn of the accusation, and

threatening to have the accuser seized, he threw open a concealed door, and she found herself in the hands of a group of men in masks; her mouth was bound, to prevent her alarming the palace, and she was thus conveyed to a gondola which immediately passed round to the canal in front of the chamber of the Doge.

“There she saw, in constrained silence and desperate expectancy, the whole preparation for the murder. She saw her unconscious father come to the case-ment, while at the same moment his assassin was gliding through the trees to make sure of his victim. She struggled, but was held down by a hand of iron. To her doubled horror, if that were possible, the assassin as he stood by the bank with the pistol in his hand, uttered the words, ‘Montalto goes to

be revenged.' A gleam of moonshine fell across his figure; the dress, the martial step, the stately gesture, all were those of her lord; she saw her father lift up his hands; she would have given worlds to know that it was in prayer. In the next instant she saw the fire of the pistol. She heard a sudden cry, and saw and heard no more!

“Montalto's manly love could not be overpowered by mere suspicion; but the scene of this night hung irresistibly upon his spirits. He was bound to Adriana by the solemn engagement which was so soon to be ratified, and still more bound by the devotion of his own impassioned heart. But it was plain that some agents were at work to degrade him in her eyes, and to render him an object of alarm in those of the Doge.

“ Justiniani had rapidly recovered; for the wound, formidable as it looked, was not in a vital part. Extensive inquiries had been made, but the assassin seemed to have dealt with other powers than those of man, for the whole proverbial vigilance of the sbirri was baffled. Adriana was still the same fond and noble-hearted being, but her cheek had not yet recovered the rose-like beauty that it wore at that fatal banquet, and even in her happiest hours, a transient shade of melancholy might be seen passing over a countenance on which Montalto gazed with something of the mingled fear and delight of an ancient idolater on the face of his Divinity.

“ It was clear that evil had been done; both had received a shock. An impression had been made, mingled of painful

yet not unpleasing elements, that took from their love all its brilliancy and animation. It was perhaps dearer and deeper, but it was sadder and more meditative. The saint's day on which the marriage was to be solemnized was not yet come ; and the Doge, to spare them both the anxieties of interviews that left both obviously less happy, offered Montalto the command of an expedition about to cruise against a pirate squadron from Tangier. His native ardour returned. He left Adriana with a soldier's brief farewell, kissed away the tear of faith and fondness that hung on her pale cheek like the dew-drop on the lily ; flew to his squadron, and returned with the pirate fleet captive into the Laguna, with a rapidity and heroic enterprise that raised him to the highest point of naval honour.

CHAPTER IX.

Look on me, maidens ; you are now the rose,
And I the trampled weed ; you are the lute,
Whereon the idlest wind makes melody ;
I am a broken instrument, whose strings
Will never sound again.

All's fair in Love.

“MONTALTO had scarcely surrendered up his trust to the Grand Council, when he flew to seek his bride. He found her pale and worn down ; she had been even in tears, and the look of involuntary and unrestrained delight with which she welcomed him, suddenly subsided into a melancholy expression that struck cold to his soul. He questioned her on the cause ; she assigned some general reason, and talked of his

expedition. But the quick eye of fondness, sharpened by the recollection of past anxieties, was not to be eluded, and Montalto at length heard from her own lips that some occurrences during his absence had given her peculiar pain.

“ He laboured to obtain the secret; but no entreaty could prevail upon her to say more ; her only answer was tears that coursed each other down her cheek. His spirit, high and haughty, was roused by this apparent obstinacy, and he rose to leave the apartment ; but the parting look which fell on him from those eyes, on which his very spirit lived ; the sad and utter withering of hope that was in their slow and fixed gaze ; the quenching of those brilliant orbs in sorrows that sprang from the heart, broke down all his determinations. He suddenly

returned, and with a cheek as pale as her own, and a lip quivering with bitter and indescribable emotion, strove to soothe her.

“ ‘ Adriana, I know that you are above all female affectation, all desire to try how far my fondness, my perfect and unalterable esteem will go. But I have almost a right to be told of whatever presses on your generous and gentle spirit. What living being has dared to pain, to offend—No answer? Are you not assured of my honour? Still silent? Then hear me, Adriana.’ He caught her hand that hung by her side, as if life had left it to gather round the heart in that moment of agony, ‘ By this pledge of truth and love, I swear, not to rest till I shall have discovered this fatal secret, let what will come.’

“ Adriana gave a sudden shudder,

and withdrew her hand, to prevent his taking the oath. He made no attempt to retain it.

The apartment opened to the gardens and the west ; the air from the sea flowed in with a delicious coolness, and swept the raven curls round Montalto's forehead ; the passion of the hour threw a deep glow over his martial and lofty countenance ; and as he sank upon his knee, and with one hand instinctively pressed upon the hilt of his scimitar, as if to attest his resolution to dare all hazards, and the other throwing back the folds of his crimson military cloak, and lifted to heaven, vowed to perish or relieve his bride from the oppressions of that fatal secret,—Adriana, overwhelmed by a host of mingled sensations, love and admiration, anguish and despair, feebly approached him, and strove to kneel

by his side. She gave a deep sigh, and fell.

“Montalto, in wild anxiety and alarm, caught her from the ground, and bore her to the window. Twilight was coming on, and the sea was falling into shade. A gondola that rapidly glided down the canal, stopped below the apartment. A loud laugh was heard, and a man sprang on board from a cluster of shrubs that shaded the casement.

“The lover felt as if his strength had at once forsaken him; the slight form of his mistress that lay so unmoving in his arms, seemed to crush him; fiery jealousy shot through his veins; but when he looked again upon that face where life was but just returning, and saw the faint, sweet smile that seemed to thank him in unabated and confiding

love, he felt that if innocence was upon earth, it was in the bosom of Adriana.

“ But she was still silent; her recovery was slow and feeble; her attendants were summoned, and he saw her borne away, as he would have seen hope and love depart from his exhausted heart for ever.

“ On that night a letter was sent to him from the palace. It was in the hand-writing of Adriana, and was found at his side on the marble floor, where he appeared to have fallen on reading it, and to have lain till morning.

“ The note was brief, and expressing the deepest interest in Montalto's happiness, released him from all engagement, and entreated him to ‘ forget the unhappy Adriana.’

“ Montalto's illness excited the strong-

est public regret. His splendid endowments, his military successes, the vigorous decision of his character, had made him already the popular hope: he was looked up to by the soldiery as the only officer capable of commanding them in the field, and by Justiniani as the only Venetian who could be matched against the martial genius and political dexterity of Sforza. But of him, as the future husband of Adriana, all his hopes had passed away. A dreariness of soul overhung her; there was a continual cloud upon her mind; the dazzling loveliness, on which no eye gazed but with homage and admiration, had lost its lustre, and, to her father's thought, her smile was more melancholy than even her tears. She had declared her intention of retiring to a convent; and Justiniani, sick of life, and bitterly regret-

ing the hour when he had left the quiet of his Dalmatian valley, for a troubled and evil world, was restrained from abandoning the ducal throne only by the knowledge, that mighty armaments were preparing by the Genoese and a combination of the Island States against his country.

CHAPTER X.

Come to my heart ; and ere thou tell'st thy tale,
One sigh of thine shall o'er that heart prevail ;
Be cruel, heartless, false, one glance of thine
Shall like a chain around my spirit twine.

Phineas Webb.

“ MONTALTO languished for some weeks in a state between life and death. His recovery was slow and feeble : in the intervals of suffering, he had adopted a sudden passion for music, and the improvisatore, Vincentio, was the frequent and favourite attendant of his couch. The variety of this youth's acquirements, the vivacity of his anecdote, and that nameless delight communicated by genius to genius, made him important to

Montalto's tired mind ; and even in some degree the depositary of its burdens.

“ He one evening found Montalto in violent agitation, and ventured to ask the cause ; the Count threw a letter on the table. ‘ There,’ said he, ‘ is the explanation of all that has made me miserable, that has half made me mad,—or is it but a new device of woman ?’

“ Vincentio read the letter ; it was anonymous, and stated, that ‘ the writer, a female attendant on the Lady Adriana, had accidentally discovered the cause of breaking off the alliance, in a report, that he had been privately married to a Ferrarese Jewess, in one of his early campaigns ; that a female of remarkable beauty had suddenly arrived in Venice, and had an interview with her Lady, which removed all doubt,

and that in her reluctance to upbraid him with an act of treachery to herself, and dishonour to her family, she had resolved to be silent, and to bury her disappointment in the sisterhood of the Santa Maria Dolorosa, in Sardinia.'

"Vincentio smiled as he laid down the paper. The Count demanded the reason of his smile. 'The letter is without a name,' was the answer.

" 'What then, has it not the look of truth?'

" 'Why should truth wear the dress of falsehood?'

" 'But do you see no consistency, no natural train of circumstances, no plausibility in the statement?'

" 'A vast deal. I think it a dexterous and daring, and, as the seal of all, I see it a successful contrivance; doing as much

honour to the subtle head that invented it, as dishonour to the unprincipled heart that could send it forth for the delusion of a noble and unsuspecting love.'

" ' But the probability of the story? "

" ' Is it true, my lord? "

" ' Not one syllable.' Montalto sank back on his couch.

" ' Then it argues only the deeper stratagem and readier malignity of its inventors. And now, my lord, I will tell you what I have heard,—what nothing but a sense of devotion to the interests of a master so deserving of the homage, of the duty, of the life of his servant could have wrung from me. The Lady Adriana is ——'

" Montalto sprang on his feet at the tone, and shot an involuntary glance of searching fire at the young narrator. He

was silent. The Count strode through the room in feverish agitation. 'Speak, Sir,' said he, 'if you value my commands, my peace of mind, my honour. Let me hear the worst at once.'

" 'My way of life,' said Vincentio, hesitatingly, 'brings me sometimes in contact with ranks of society, of which your lordship can have no knowledge. I have had an early fondness for variety of character, and this is to be found only among the populace. I have been often amused by their native humour, sometimes startled by their ferocity, but have from time to time heard among them matters which would be thought high secrets, even in the Doge's council. A few nights since, after an evening spent in exhibiting my powers, such as they are, in the palace of the patrician Lerici, I made my way, tired to death

of lights and music, groupes of plumed and jewelled beauty, and nobles covered with scarlet and stars, to the little obscure Casa di Marte, beside the St. George's Canal. The hour was too early for the usual conflux of its grotesque visitors, and I was sitting in a dark corner, when one of the usual Buffos of the place came in to prepare for the business of the night. I had often laughed at his exhibitions, and I invited him to take coffee with me. The conversation turned upon your illness, my Lord, which was then the general topic, and I expressed the common hope of your recovery. To this the Buffo gave his assent, but with an air half mystery half jest, which induced me to inquire further. It suddenly struck me that, according to our practice here, some attempt had been made to take you off by poison.

“ ‘ Against this surmise the Buffo protested with an unwary seriousness that proved his being master of some of the springs of the affair. I insisted ; he was alarmed and reluctant. I at length obtained from him the confession, that the Lady Adriana —— . But you change colour, my lord.’—Montalto made him a sign of nervous impatience.—‘ Simply, she loved another.’

“ Montalto’s face was covered with his hand ; he sat upright as a pillar, not a nerve quivered. ‘ In my lord’s absence,’ added the improvisatore, ‘ a young Dalmatian had arrived, probably an early intimate, and had made his way to the palace ; he had been even seen in the gardens under the lady’s windows.’ Montalto shook from head to foot with bitter recollection.

“ Vincentio went on. ‘ The matter

was soon known to the police ; the Sbirri were set to watch him ; the gardens were planted with spies, gondolas rowed up and down the Laguna for weeks together ; but he had become invisible, in all but his traces ; fresh footsteps were found night after night under the windows of the left wing of the palace ; music was heard,—nay, even voices in deep conversation ; yet nothing could be discovered of the actual maker of all this fatal mischief. Whether he sank into the earth, or had the gift of living at the bottom of the sea, no man could conjecture how he came or how he escaped. He had vanished.’

“ Montalto groaned in agony, and flung himself down like one whose life was stricken. Vincentio approached to assist him, but he repelled all help ; and, lifting his head alone from the

ground, like a lion dying by the shaft of the hunter, and retaining his majesty and his rage while his strength was ebbing away, demanded in a voice of thunder, ‘ Did Justiniani know those things?’ ‘ All,’ was the brief answer.

“ Montalto drew the scimitar from his side, and lifting it up with his feeble hand, seemed by the quivering of his bloodless lip, and the fierce convulsion of his frame, to be making a vow of vengeance. The Improvisatore interposed. ‘ Let not my lord give way too openly to his just indignation. The stories of the rabble are often wild exaggerations. The Buffo may have repeated but the fiction of some Casino, or the scandal of some dismissed menial.’ Montalto gave a smile of haughty incredulity. He slowly returned the scimitar

into its sheath, and, just before it was completely in, checked his hand, gazed on its glittering blade, and uttered in a low and gloomy soliloquy: ‘When next I see you, you shall be red in Justiniani’s heart’s blood, or—in mine.’ He struck it into the sheath with sudden force, and doubly exhausted by the effort, again sank down.

“Vincentio soothed him with all the arts of entreaty and consolation, and finally acknowledged that from his strong interest in discovering the truth of the tale, he had by the united force of ducats and menaces, led the Buffo to confess, that he was deeply acquainted with the purposes of the young Dalmatian. ‘This evening,’ added he, ‘I was to have had the proof with my own eyes of the Lady Adriana’s reception of this stranger. The Buffo had been employed

to make the arrangements for continuing those interviews in safety, and I was to be conveyed within sight of those treacherous lovers before the moon rose.'

"Montalto was himself again; he started from the ground, and sternly commanded that no interruption should be attempted. 'If a faithless woman has deserted me, let her go down the wind. She is not worthy of making a man of honour either a slave or a criminal.' 'Then all is well again,' observed Vincentio, 'and the Doge is safe.' 'No,' said Montalto; 'but I scorn to use the means of treachery, and he is yet inaccessible to the revenge of a subject. But the time may come. In my madness I thought of stabbing him on his throne.'

"Montalto's eye was caught by a sudden movement of his listener, who had unconsciously half drawn his dag-

ger. He checked the weapon; and Vincentio, recovering from his surprise, allowed that he had been straying into reveries of Venetian vengeance for the wrongs of the most generous and most forgiving of lords.

“ The conversation was long and painful. Montalto, with a helpless confidence unusual to his vigorous and proud nature, gradually disclosed to Vincentio the progress of his passion, his hopes, and the agony that disappointment and insults were twining round his heart. Vincentio, with the quick vindictiveness of the Italian, urged him to abandon his thankless allegiance to the Doge, to seize the ducal throne, which the popular favour had already marked out for him, and which his troops would render secure, and then to punish the accomplices in the insult to his honour and feelings.

“ But to inflame Montalto to this height he found impossible, and he was forced to content himself with a compromise that the Count should accompany him in the gondola, and satisfy his own eyes of the presence of the Dalmatian.

“ The moon was touching the trees of Friuli with her first light, when the Count's gondola fell slowly and silently down the Grand Canal. Here Vincenzio came on board, and directed the rowers to pass through a narrow vaulted entrance under one of the superb palaces on its banks. The gondola was lost in darkness for awhile, till a lamp glimmered from what seemed a shrine; here it was left, with orders to wait the Count's return.

“ Vincenzio lighted his lamp, and glided on, frequently stopping to listen,

as sounds of laughter and music, with the tread of many feet, followed by lonely hurried steps above their heads, were heard from to time. ‘We are now,’ said he, ‘under the Senator Varini’s palace : he gives a ball to-night.’ A shadowy figure passed in the distance. Vincentio gave a signal ; it was answered. ‘There,’ said he, ‘is our man ; the Buffo is one of the spies of the police ; he has been on duty here, catching the whispers of a menial, who communicates to him regularly every proceeding of the night, every name, every word, nay, almost every look, for the benefit of my Lords the Inquisitors to-morrow.’

“ The Buffo left his post, and followed. Further on they heard sounds as of a violent struggle above, the fall of something heavy, and in another moment screams and groans that made the Count

shudder and stop. Vincentio raised his lamp, and demanded of the Buffo the cause of those frightful clamours. As the light fell on his countenance, Montalto thought that the features were familiar to him ; but their expression was a wild and repulsive mixture of ferocity and grim ridicule. ‘ Nothing but a murder, I suppose,’ said the Buffo. Montalto was startled; and his companion pressed his finger to his lip. ‘ Well, if I am not to answer, why do you ask me questions?’ said the Buffo, with a sneer. ‘ To die, is but to die. We are now under—let me see,’ and he took out a kind of chart of those subterranean passages, ‘ ay, we are now under the Marchese Malatesta’s palace ; she has married four husbands already ; and, if I am not much mistaken, by to-morrow she will be ready for a fifth.’—‘ Can she

have murdered her husband?' burst out Montalto, in a tone of undisguised horror. 'Why, perhaps, not with her own hand,' said the ruffian, with a laugh; 'though such things have been before now. But this evening Tomaso, Bartolomeo, and Giovanni were under orders; and as the Signora is engaged to open the ball at the Grand Fiscal's house, and she would not keep the noble company waiting, it is likely enough that she has expedited the matter.—But here is our door.'

"The Buffo opened an iron wicket, which led into the depth of the wall, and in a few steps Montalto found himself, to his unequalled surprise, in a grotto, where he had often sat with Adriana, enjoying the evening air, and the rising of the moon over the magnificent bosom of the Adriatic.

The evening breeze now breathed; the moon was covering with a sheet of liquid silver the waters that lay smooth as a mirror; the mingled sounds of the great city fell like music on the ear in that spot of solitary loveliness. Before him shone in the moonlight, among a cluster of roses, an exquisite statue of Venus, which he had brought as one of the trophies of his first Ferrarese expedition, and which he had dedicated to Adriana. Within view was the casement of her chamber; it was shaded by a profusion of fragrant shrubs, the luxuriant and blooming with the fresh beauty of spring; but a lamp burning within, as at the shrine of an idol, lighted up the richly coloured panes, and threw a long line of radiance on the ground.

“ Montalto felt his revenge die away

as he gazed on a scene so full of unspeakable remembrances. He drew his cap upon his brows, and felt all the bitter sweet of those thoughts that make up so much of love. But at that moment, the Buffo making signs to him to approach, Vincentio led the Count by the arm to a spot from which the apartment might be fully seen.

“Adriana was in her chamber: she had been reading a letter, which she often laid down to wipe away a tear. The sound of a guitar among the trees caught her ear; she slowly arose, and kissing the letter once more, folded it, and put it in her bosom. As she stood up, the light of the lamp fell on her forehead, and threw round it a white splendour like the halo round the brow of an angel.

“ Montalto had never seen her look so lovely; the paleness of her cheek suddenly suffused by emotion with a tinge of rose; the dark tresses, braided under an antique diadem; the large and noble eye, no longer sparkling, but filled with a rich melancholy as she stood listening to the prelude of the guitar, overwhelmed him with a sense of sublime and unearthly beauty.

“ Even his companions were struck with admiration. ‘ She looks like the Madonna,’ whispered the conducting ruffian. ‘ She is the fitter to die!’ returned Vincentio; then in a low and shuddering tone murmured, ‘ It must be done.’ They glanced round at Montalto; he was still standing on the same spot, fixed as by a spell. Vincentio seized his passive and icy hand, and forced him forwards.

“ Adriana now left the chamber, and

passed into the grotto by which they had entered. A figure stole from the cluster of roses, and knelt at her feet. Montalto felt his brain grow dizzy, a darkness came upon his eyes—Vincentio was suddenly at his side. He muttered, ‘ Now! strike the traitress, and be revenged!’ forcing, as he spoke, a stiletto into the Count’s grasp. Montalto dropped it in horror on the ground. The noise aroused Adriana; she shrieked; the youth sprang from his knee, and fled; and at the same instant Montalto felt himself stabbed behind. He instinctively caught up the stiletto that sparkled at his feet, and struck a desperate, random blow at his assassin. The stiletto was plunged up to the hilt; and the wounded man, with a heave and a groan, dropped, writhing round Montalto’s knees.

“ The tumult had alarmed the palace ;

and a crowd of officers and domestics, with torches, rushed confusedly through the garden. In the grotto they found Montalto bleeding, with Adriana in his arms; and Vincentio dying before them.

“The Doge alone was absent. He was engaged in high council. A conspiracy had been detected, which was to have broken out at midnight; the firing of the arsenal was a part of the design, and the blaze was to have been a signal for the embarkation of an army, already brought down by a forced march to the opposite shore.

“But Adriana’s danger overpowered all public cares, and he hastened to the garden. Vincentio raised his dying eyes on his approach, and desired the forgiveness of all. ‘This night,’ said he, ‘was to have been a memorable one

for Venice, and the enemies of Venice. The son of Mancini was to have washed out in blood the injuries of his father !’

“ The Doge gazed on him with a look of strong inquiry. ‘ In these dying features,’ said Vincentio, ‘ there may be now no resemblance. But I have stronger proof, that I was the son of that bold, noble, undone, lord of your proud Venice.’

“ The crowd drew back, and stared at each other. ‘ My story,’ added he, ‘ is one of few things and few words. I was a rebellious son, and I abandoned my father; I was a rebellious citizen, and I conspired against my country;—allured by the promises of Sforza and the Genoese, I drew the noble Mancini into my views; another day, and the army which I then commanded would have been within your walls, and Mancini your

monarch. The Count Montalto snatched the victory from my very grasp, and gave my father over to popular vengeance. I swore his destruction. I left the army at Milan. I came to Venice; I made my way among your populace; I prepared an insurrection that was to have broken out this night. But my first business was to smite the man who had laid my father's crown in the dust.

“He loved; I wrought him by a train of trivial circumstances to suspect the constancy of the lovely being to whom his soul was bound.

“I urged him to the murder of the Doge; but his generous nature shrank from the thought. Determined to make him drink the blackest draught of vengeance, I urged him even to the death of his mistress. But, let me not die without your forgiveness, my Lord

Montalto, to that crime you could not be tempted.

“ ‘ She was innocent; the tale that first separated you was of my invention; the youth that but now knelt at her feet was an agent of mine, whom she met in the hope of receiving tidings of you. All has been illusion on my side—all has been honour, truth, and fidelity, on yours, and that of the lady of your love.’ His eyes closed, and he sank into a silence unbroken by the circle.

“ ‘ Was it your hand that treacherously struck me?’ at length said Montalto. ‘ I never struck man but in his front,’ was the answer. ‘ The villain who stabbed you from behind is gone. I heard him plunge into the canal. I had reserved you for a loftier vengeance. This night, when your fleets should have been blazing round you,—when

your palaces should have been falling before our cannon,—when your citizens should have been driven to slaughter like sheep before wolves,—I had determined to single out the author of Mancini's fall, and on the very spot dyed with my gallant father's blood, to have made libation of yours or my own.' He stopped, turned on his face, and died without a groan.

“ There was now no further room for doubt or sorrow. Montalto's wound was rapidly healed, for happiness alone makes no mistakes in science. The letter over which Adriana had wept was one which told of Montalto's enduring passion. She awoke to a new life of joy; and Justiniani, in his old age, full of fame and honours, saw his children's children.”

CHAPTER XI.

Therefore, before I speak, arm well your mind,
And think you're to be touch'd even to the quick,
That so prepared for ill, you may be less
Surprised to hear the worst.

Shakspeare.

VAUGHAN departed for England with something like renewed hope. All that he had supposed might not have happened. His own experience of human nature presented a melancholy evidence of its probability, but yet he rejected the conclusion, and Catherine's name was again pronounced with its former tenderness.

As every day shortened the period of his painful suspense, his agitation con-

tinued to increase. Dr. Johnson says, "We are never so impatient of delay, as when we know that delay cannot be long," and sensibly did Vaughan feel the truth of this remark, at the close of each day's journey.

The face of the country through which he travelled already bore striking evidence of the tyrant's overthrow. The labours of the husbandman were renewed; the sounds of desolation had given place to the busy hum of industry; the cottage was no longer untenanted; the deafening drum, the shrill trumpet, were exchanged for the cheerful tones of the native guitar; the clear air was no longer darkened with columns of smoke; the bright green of the summer-landscape was no longer disfigured by ghastly remnants of battle. Some hearts yet heaved with the me-

anory of recent loss ; some hurried graves remained, to point out those hallowed spots which had been the scene of such mournful devastation, and even those the hand of piety had decorated with flowers and laurels, thus giving to their sad memorials a covering of bloom and beauty, which might almost have banished from the mind of the stranger the images of death and suffering.

On his arrival at Lisbon, all around him appeared to tell the same tale of returning prosperity. It was a season of general rejoicing. He remembered his remark on landing, that this was a country which wanted but peace to make it a terrestrial paradise, yet he prepared to quit it now in all its luxuriance, without one lingering feeling of regret. The friends of his childhood

awaited him on another shore ; the hopes of his youth, the dreams of his ambition, all pointed towards England ; and it was with a beating heart that he set his foot in the proud vessel, whose sails were swelling for England.

The passage was unusually tedious ; the winds and waves had no sympathy with his impetuous feelings. In vain he paced the deck with fretful and impatient steps. No kindly breeze fanned his feverish cheek. He urged the sailors with a multiplicity of useless questions, and often fancied that he could descry the outline of the English shores, when other eyes could see nothing but the expanse of waters.

But the anxious and weary hours were exhausted at last, and with a burst of instinctive joy he leaped on shore. At Falmouth, where they landed, he

stopped awhile, to collect his thoughts. His first idea was to write to Catherine; but this project was abandoned almost as soon as formed. A day's further delay could be now of no material consequence; and the surprise and agitation of this unexpected meeting might possibly be the very best method of ascertaining the true state of her feelings.

Towards his uncle and mother, no such motive could exist, and to them he prepared to write. Even then he felt something of the painful doubt that absence so often brings. It was long since he had heard from them. Unhappy casualties might have occurred even in the weary days of his passage, and his nervous fancy began to figure some sudden and fearful shock awaiting him on his arrival. As these reflections chased each other in rapid succession, he

thought that he heard a voice familiar to him in the court-yard below. He started up, then smiling at his own impulse, "Psha," he exclaimed, "I forget that I am in England, and the voice of every clown now appears familiar to me." But the next instant, the decrepid yet busy form of old Peter, his uncle's domestic, met his eye, immediately under the window. "But, what calamity may not have brought him here? Is the household broken up?" thought Vaughan. He threw up the window, and called the old valet. His surprise would have made a subject for the pencil. The old man turned suddenly round, let the stick drop from his hand, and remained with open mouth, and vacant gaze, rivetted to the spot where he stood. "So you don't know me," said Vaughan: "Did you think I was no longer in the

land of the living, my old friend? how goes on all at home?"

Peter recovered his recollection and speech together. "It is himself, sure enough: oh, that your honour had but come a few days sooner, or not at all. You have chosen an evil hour. Alas, the day!"

"What can have brought me home?" exclaimed Vaughan; "what should bring me, but peace, and the hope of a welcome home. Come, find your way to me here. Let me know all that you can tell me."

Peter at length made his appearance at the door, which he continued to hold in his hand, as if even then loth to advance any further, his eyes bent on the ground, sighing bitterly; a few tears even found their way. "Come, Sir," said Vaughan, struggling against his

fears, "out with the worst at once. I am prepared for any thing."—"Alas, the day," ejaculated Peter, "that my master had but lived to see this day."—"Dead!" cried Vaughan; "dead! There passed away a spirit not understood by the world. He had a heart, generous and forgiving. He was kinder to me than I deserved."—"Less,—a hundred times less," exclaimed Peter angrily, "I thought—but it is a strange world, Mr. Francis. But there may be treachery and deceit at the bottom of the will."—"I can easily guess what you have not the courage to tell me, Peter," said Vaughan; "my cousin, I conclude, inherits all."—"Every shilling, sir!" cried Peter, wrathfully; "and never came an estate into the power of one that will misuse it more; and how it came about at this

moment I am at a loss to tell. Why, it is not six months since that my master made a will in your honour's favor; and then, when he lay on his death-bed, down comes this artful nephew, and turns every thing his own way. That will was made on the very day after the news reached us of the great battle of Vittoria. When your honour got promotion—when the Gazette came in that night, my master made me read every syllable of it—said that you were a credit to the name of Vaughan, and should have wherewith to support it when he was gone. Next morning he sent for a lawyer, and made his will in my presence—locked it up, and bade me remember where he had placed it. When I saw plunder and treachery going on, almost before the hearse had left the door, I secured this will, and produced

it too. But Mr. Philip Courtney laughed in my face, said I knew nothing of law, and that the first will went for nothing. But my mind misgave me, he was so anxious to get hold of it; and I swore by my master's death-bed, that it should never pass from my hands into any but your honour's. I have borne it about me to this day; and here it is."

"Your zeal and fidelity shall not go unrewarded," said Vaughan; "but you must not be sanguine in your hopes for me. If I have been played false—I shall assert my rights. But are you still living at the hall?"—"No, sir," said Peter, with a heavy sigh; "I had hoped to have died in it; but young Mr. Courtney was not one to whom grey hairs and long service are any recommendation. Thank heaven, I am not left to starve in my old age; my worthy mas-

ter took care of that. I am now on my way to London to spend the remainder of my days with a widowed sister."

"And does my cousin mean to reside in the old mansion-house?" said Vaughan.

"Yes," said Peter, with fresh indignation: "there is a new housekeeper come down already; a fine town lady, all drest out in flounces and laces that put old Sarah quite out of the world; and a new butler or steward, one that seems to know how to act the gentleman as well as his master; and two powdered puppies, that seem to know best how to lounge about all day, and play at cards half the night."

"But the house is so unlike all Courtney's ideas of modern elegance," said Vaughan, rather musing aloud than addressing the faithful domestic. "Ay, he'll soon alter that," cried Peter;

“why, there have been a crowd of upholsterers and carpenters at work ever since the day of the funeral. The old furniture, that my old master valued so much, my new one says is good for nothing but fire-wood. The picture of the old gentleman’s father, the admiral, that has hung up in the front drawing-room time out of mind, was thrown into a cart, to be sold along with the rest. The curiosity-room is to be pulled entirely down, to make way for an entrance-hall or greenhouse, or something of the kind. The two parlours are to be thrown into a ball-room ; and his very study is to be all new furnished as a dressing-room for young Mrs. Courtney that is to be.”

“Going to be married too,” cried Vaughan, with a pang ; “to whom?”

“Nay,” said the old narrator, with an expressive shake of the head ; “the

lady that could make such a choice has not much chance of happiness; poor as I am, I would not let a child of mine change places with his bride."

A horn sounded below; the London coach was driving into the yard. Peter rose. "I must be gone, Sir," "Not without some remembrance, my old friend," said Vaughan, putting a purse into his hand. Peter bowed profoundly as he retreated towards the door, and alternately muttering benedictions and poising the purse in his hand, took his slow way down stairs.

CHAPTER XII.

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
'To sever for years ;
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss ;
Surely that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

Lord Byron.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fortitude with which Vaughan had disguised his feelings from the messenger of such unwelcome news, he was not such a hero, or to speak more properly, such a stoic, as to contemplate his loss with absolute indifference.

The evidence which he held in his

hand of his uncle's previous intentions; and the account of the immediate consequences of his cousin's arrival, admitted of but one interpretation. Courtney stood before him in his native hue, and his heartless baseness presented a sickening and revolting picture of human nature. If it be true that early life is more susceptible of happiness than a more advanced period, it is equally true that all the painful emotions are with it proportionably keen. To the aged, an act of unkindness or treachery is no longer new, and all sensibility is deadened by frequency of trial. There are individuals, around whose life a miserable fatality appears to cling,—whom disappointment awaits at every turn,—whom, even in the morning of life, the sickness of hope deferred wraps like a cloud. Vaughan began to fear that he was one of those. There

had been times, still fresh in his recollection, when hope had animated every thing round him, but they had been “beautiful and brief,” meteors that shed their brilliant but uncertain light across a waste.

Might not Catherine’s coldness and long silence be traced to this one fatality? Solitude is the natural diet of melancholy. Vaughan felt its danger, and resolved to shorten the period as much as possible. “If Catherine still display but the independent spirit which glowed in her early professions, the loss I have now sustained will appear comparatively trivial,—and my confidence will rest upon a basis which henceforth nothing can shake. But two days’ journey separates me from the object of all my solitudes. My last stake will be cast; I shall then have nothing

further to learn,—perhaps nothing further to hope; but suspense will agonize me no longer.”

It was too late when he reached London to intrude on General Greville's house. The night, spite of his fatigue, appeared incalculably long, and the morning seemed as if it would never break through the dark and lurid mists of a November sky.

It was but a quarter of an hour's walk from the hotel to the General's mansion, and when he reached the door, he felt that the distance had not given him time to collect his thoughts. He knocked with a palpitating heart,—and when the door of the lofty hall was opened, he stood like one afraid to pronounce the name that hovered on his lips. To inquire for General Greville, who had possibly never heard his name, or worse, to

whom it might be no welcome sound, would have been doubly embarrassing; and he had at length gained courage to ask if Miss Greville were at home? "At home and alone, Sir," was the answer; "but far from well, Sir." "Ill!" cried Vaughan, in alarm. "Not confined to her room, Sir; but I do not think that Miss Greville will see any one to-day." "She *must* see me," said Vaughan, incautiously; "I am ———. Come, Sir, you may venture to admit me against all prohibition. I shall announce myself." Vaughan burst impetuously forwards; and the gazing domestic, retreating in surprise, permitted him to pass without further opposition.

The apartment into which he was shown was magnificent; but it gave an impression of unhappiness in its owner.

Specimens of unsettled and varying occupations were scattered over the or-moluble, — drawings unfinished, as if abandoned in weariness, — a book turned upon its face, as if unable to afford the solace which had been sought in its pages, — and the commencement of an open letter, which the writer had apparently wanted resolution to complete, — all met his view in the rapid glance which he cast over the apartment. A Virginia nightingale, which he had given her the day before they parted, seemed the only object which had engaged attention; its superb cage was ornamented with fresh roses. The door was open, and kindness had evidently so conquered the timidity of its nature, that it hopped fearlessly upon his hand, and seemed unwilling to quit its station.

“Poor bird, perhaps you are all that remains to me of old recollections!” were the first words that broke from Vaughan’s overpowered spirit.

He heard his name pronounced in the next room; he was unable any longer to restrain his feelings, and flinging open the door, saw Catherine.

But what a countenance met his gaze! so sad, so care-worn, so unlike that bloom of young beauty indelibly impressed upon his heart. He had seen her in sadness before; he had left her helpless and dependent; but the spirit which unkindness could not subdue,—the affection which broke through all restraint, and survived in darkness and storm, had then lighted up her eye, and flushed her cheek, and given brilliancy and vividness to every feature. But never had he read such a tale of

suffering as that sunk eye and wan cheek now discovered to him.

“ Can I hope for pardon? I who dared to doubt you, but in thought,” cried Vaughan, rushing forwards. “ My Catherine, that pale cheek tells more than words.”

Catherine pronounced his name in an accent of thrilling tenderness, which could not be mistaken; but, overwhelmed by surprise and agitation, she would have sunk at his feet, had not his arm given her aid,—her head resting on his arm, her eyes closed, even her lip colourless, and her heart beating so feebly as scarcely to give symptoms of life; Vaughan hung over her in terror. “ I have killed her; I have tried her too far; look up, my Catherine. But speak; this chilling, this death-like silence will break my heart.”

“ Oh, Francis !” sighed she, turning upon him a gaze of mingled despair and fondness, “ loved but too well, and restored but too late.”

“ I may have been loved too well,” said Vaughan dejectedly, his heart sinking with vague apprehension, almost less from the words which fell from her lips than from the hollow and sepulchral tone in which they were uttered. “ Loved beyond my deserts I may have been ; but not returned too late, if your affections are still mine. I am returned, as you once hoped to find me, constant to my early love, and not altogether unhonoured. I have won, and am free to seek you ; Heaven permits our union, and man has no power to part us.”

“ But man has the power, and will exert it,” cried Catherine, wildly ; “ there is a barrier more fearful than a

heart like yours can be led to imagine. The ocean has had no power to sever us ; but there is a gulf which you cannot pass, and I, I myself have pronounced the decree." She wept a flood of tears.

" And is this my welcome home ?" cried Vaughan ; " I am beset by evil on all sides ; I have been calumniated and betrayed,—but on one I rested my sole remaining hope ; he who is in his grave cannot now rise from it to repair the injustice which he has done me,—but you might have atoned for it. I thought that there was one who had still the heart to make England what I once hoped to find it—a home."

" It is no home for either of us," returned Catherine weeping, " my only home can be the grave. Look not on me thus, I may not meet that look as I should once have met it. I may not

listen to your language. I may not answer you, as I should once have answered. Leave me, Vaughan, leave me; your right over me is past away."

"And who has acquired my right," said Vaughan, proudly. "Was not your image beside me in the delirium of fever? did not your remembrance stimulate every action of my life? did I not tear myself from you and England to earn a name and income worthy of your acceptance? An income which, however small for ambition, is enough for love; and a name which I am now returned to defend, and which the breath of calumny shall never injure more."

"He is coming, he is coming!" cried Catherine, casting a bewildered glance around, as if she heard some intruder, whom yet she feared to name, "he is coming!" "No one is coming whom

you can dread," said Vaughan, tenderly attempting to soothe the agony which seemed to alter every feature; "nor father nor friend shall oppose the claims which your own generous heart acknowledges." "He is coming, he is coming!" she repeated, in yet more terrified accents, with her eyes still glancing at the door. "He can, he will separate us; he must not find you here. Your mutual recognition would kill me. Guess, but do not impose on me the task of telling my own bitter tale. Leave me, Francis, to the dark fate, the miserable, unspeakable, lot which I have chosen; and which I deserve to meet, since I could bring myself to choose it." "There is some fearful mystery in your words," exclaimed Vaughan, "which must be explained. I claim your promise—I claim my bride."

“ He is come,” she almost screamed, as the door opened, and the object of her nameless terror appeared to Vaughan’s astonished view in the person of Courtney.

“ Vaughan! you here?” exclaimed he, starting back, as if he had seen a spectre. But suddenly recovering his presence of mind, he advanced with a fixed eye; and in a low deliberate voice said, “ Mr. Vaughan, I am surprised to find you under this roof. But you are perhaps not aware of this lady’s circumstances. And for you, madam,” darting a fierce glance at the trembling Catherine, “ it is improper, situated as you are, to admit of such interviews.” “ Stand off, Courtney,” exclaimed Vaughan, flaming with indignation. “ She is mine by every bond. Come not one step nearer, if you would not have me forget the re-

lationship between us." "Question *her*," said Philip, as he stood with folded arms and gloomy brow, but yet a gleam of triumph playing across his dark countenance, "if you wish to hear her with her own lips renounce you for ever."

"Look up, my love," said Vaughan, tenderly, "Why do you tremble? Disprove by one word so base a charge. Have I not sworn to you, that neither father nor friend shall oppose those claims which your own noble heart acknowledged?" "Neither father nor friend," cried Courtney, with a sneer, "but perhaps a husband may; your right, sir, over that lady ceased from the hour she promised to become my wife. This, I presume, will suffice with a man of honour." "False," cried Vaughan, rendered furious by the bare intimation,

“ it is, it must be false. A word, Catherine, one word, to put that slanderer to shame—speak and fear not.” “ The truth,” murmured Catherine, in a voice so low and broken as to be almost unintelligible; but Vaughan caught the feeble sounds—he looked despairingly in her face. “ Catherine, this moment decides all—my heart is bursting. I am bewildered. Is all the world deceit and treachery?”

“ You are right, Francis,” she murmured, making a convulsive effort for disclosure, “ for you *trusted* me.”

The hand which but a moment before Vaughan had raised to his lips, with all the devotion of a confiding spirit, he dropped in sudden despair.

“ Are you satisfied?” said Courtney, with a sardonic smile.

“ I *am* satisfied, sir,” answered

Vaughan, in deep but dignified indignation. “ I am satisfied that truth exists not in the world ; I am satisfied that you are formed for each other. May neither of you ever cross my path again.”

“ Oh stop, Francis !” cried Catherine, in a voice of piercing anguish, “ one moment. Hear but my defence.” He paused ; but she was silent, overcome by emotion. He turned away. “ You need make none, Miss Greville. To betray me, and for him, my bitterest enemy ! There wanted but this to complete the mortal injuries which I have received at his hands.” He turned with a fiery eye upon Courtney. “ You, sir, defrauded me of my inheritance ; you have now robbed me of a heart which I *once* valued more than life. Beware !”

He turned wildly towards the door. Catherine lifted up her hands and eyes

to heaven in supplication. He gave her a pitying look. On Courtney, who shrank at his approach, his glance shot wrath inextinguishable. "From you, sir, I expected nothing less than fraud and falsehood; but from her!—she has made me sick of human nature. Farewell, madam, for ever!" So saying, he rushed down the stairs with the impetuosity of a maniac, and was gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ For I am in so far in guilt,
That sin will pluck on sin.”

Shakspeare.

FOR some time after Vaughan's departure, Catherine stood gazing at the door with the motionless attitude of one overwhelmed by some incurable grief. Courtney advanced, and attempted to take her hand, but she drew it back with an air of disdain which staggered him. “ Leave me,” she exclaimed, in a stern and lofty tone—“ leave me to the desolation which you have brought upon me, if you would not see me driven to frenzy before your eyes.”

Courtney beheld her anguish with an unaltered countenance ; and emboldened by previous success, stood as if waiting till the storm should blow over. “ I have no resource, then, but in my own chamber,” cried Catherine, slowly and haughtily passing by him ; “ which I will not quit, till you have left the house, I will admit no intruder on this the darkest day of my existence.”

Courtney dared make no effort to detain her. “ I will tame that fiery spirit of her’s,” said he, breathing more freely when he found himself alone. “ Mine she shall be, in spite of this unlucky meeting. Women’s purposes are feeble. Experience has shown me this. There was a time when she would not hear me speak. She repelled me with true female scorn. Others might have given up the affair, yet here we are on

the brink of marriage. Her fortune is worth the trouble ; for without it I am ruined."

There was one thought which occasioned some temporary anxiety. He wished to have ascertained what degree of explanation had taken place between Catherine and Vaughan ; but still flattered himself, as was the case, that he had interrupted them in time to prevent Vaughan's vindication of himself. If so, all might yet go on well, as he trusted to Catherine's delicacy, and Vaughan's indignation, to prevent all future communication. But one train of ideas had scarcely been laid at rest, when they were succeeded by others of a more startling nature. Vaughan had intimated some knowledge of the injustice which had been done him. " De-frauded of his inheritance !" Could his

agent in this dark transaction have betrayed him? He could not shut his eyes to the danger of his situation.

Courtney returned home; the family were all dispersed on various engagements. There was no witness of his agitation. As he walked hastily up and down the room, his lip quivered, large drops stood upon his forehead, and his cheek became of a frightful and death-like paleness. He felt that his character and fortunes alike hung upon a single thread, that a sword was suspended over his head.

He was interrupted by the entrance of Benson, whose treachery was then uppermost in his thoughts, and whom he had kept in peculiar attendance ever since the eventful day of his uncle's death, with the view of keeping an eye upon his conduct. Benson entered with

an air of almost insolent freedom, and sneeringly put a paper into his master's hands. "What do you mean by this?" said Courtney, haughtily. "I am not to be interrupted."

"It is a trifling bill, sir, over which you will perhaps cast your eyes," answered Benson, without retreating a step. "A bill," said Courtney, glancing over it. "Yes, so I perceive, and to no trifling amount; but what have I to do with it, is it not a debt of your own?" "I beg your pardon," answered Benson, adhering to his point, "it is a concern of your's, as I have not the means of discharging it at present. I will thank you to give me a cheque for the money."

"Scoundrel!" cried Courtney, rendered furious by the application, and yet more by the manner in which it was made.

“ You will perhaps do well to consider it, sir,” said the man, with the same imperturbable air. “ I have lived on promises for some time, but begin to find the necessity of a more substantial recompence. I cannot find that I am much the better for having consented to play the rogue, and begin to think that it might be as well to turn honest for the future.”

“ Oh, quite as well,” said Courtney, with a sallow smile, “ if you think that with that front of your’s, and such a report as I may give of you, you will find many to believe in its possibility. Let me tell you, sir,” his voice trembled with sudden rage, “ that once thrown on the world again, you may not find it so easy to obtain another shelter.”

“ And let me tell you, sir,” said Benson, in the same easy and assured accent

as before, "that if you refuse my request, beggary—ruin—a prison, stare me in the face. And desperate circumstances sometimes—suggest desperate means of relief."

"Desperate means," said Courtney, starting at the words, and yet more at the resolute look and tone of the speaker, "Villain!" grasping his arm with nervous violence, "you have not dared to betray me. Punishment as well as reward is in my power." "And revenge," answered Benson, in his stern accent, "is in mine. I have but to throw myself into a coach this day, and take the road to Caversham, where Mr. Vaughan is now gone—."

"And come in for your share of the punishment," bitterly retorted Courtney, and then, with his habitual presence of mind, added with a smile,

“ Instead of quietly awaiting the *certain* testimonies of my gratitude. I have already told you, that I found my uncle’s affairs greatly embarrassed ; that I must clear the estate of some heavy incumbrances, before I can have much in my power.” Benson looked incredulous, and Courtney turned to another topic. “ But who told you that Vaughan was in England ? it is probably a mistake ; the report of some blunderer,” said he, with carelessness. “ That blunderer was myself,” replied Benson. “ I saw him not ten minutes ago in the very hotel where I was sent with your letter ; he looked as pale as a ghost, and ordered horses for Caversham, where Mrs. Vaughan resides.”

Courtney was silent, struck his hand on his forehead, and walked away in thought. At length he said, “ Here is

a cheque for the money you want ; I would save you from a prison ; but I give you warning, that this is the last money which I will pay for you.”—“ Not the last,” muttered Benson, as he withdrew, with the glance of a snake at the creature that is to be its certain prey.

“ While Vaughan lives,” said Courtney to himself, “ I am in this miscreant’s power. While Vaughan lives,” he repeated ; but so dark were the thoughts that followed this reflection, that he shuddered, unable to give them utterance. He caught a passing glimpse of himself in a mirror opposite, and started at the ashy hue of his complexion, and the wild expression which glared in his eyes. “ Afraid of a shadow !” said the wretched man, turning away, and covering his face with his quivering hands. “ Could the world see me now !” His

mind burned with contending passions ; but his frame gave way, he flung himself upon a couch, and spoke with the wild and broken interjections of a terrible dream. “ Life of continual terror ! ” he exclaimed ; “ he will seek justice ! — I shall be undone ! — he must not cross my objects again ! Vaughan, Vaughan, what curse fixed you between me and fortune ? Why am I exposed to temptations beyond the strength of man to resist ! Shame, beggary, all to be cured by one act of self-defence. No more ! — life for life ! ” He clenched his hands, and struck them against his forehead in an agony too bitter to be controlled. Glancing suddenly round, he perceived, to his horror and amazement, the door slightly opened ; it closed. Springing forwards, he perceived the figure of Benson stealing down the stairs.

He rushed after him, and dragged him into the room, furious with passion, "Stop, villain—spy!" he exclaimed, where are you going?—what brought you here?—what have you heard?—how dared you steal upon me? I have satisfied your demand. Begone!"

"Am I to go or stay, sir," said Benson, calmly disengaging himself from Courtney's grasp, and looking up in his face with an air of cool inquiry. Courtney was baffled by his look. "Scoundrel, what have you heard?"—"Nothing, sir." "Nothing," said Courtney. "Well, and right, there was nothing to hear. But I have been ill of late," he tottered again to the couch, saying, as he sank upon it, "I am feverish, Benson; I should not be surprised if I were to go mad!"

The menial cast a keen glance, which

had something of triumph in it at his fallen master. "If, sir, you have any burden on your mind, I am faithful," said he, in a whisper. "Unburden myself, and to you!" retorted Courtney, with a smile of supreme contempt; "Unburden myself to you;" he burst into a paroxysm of laughter; then suddenly breaking it off, and fixing a strong glare on his listener's countenance, "You,—whom a guinea would bribe to betray me at any time! I have nothing on my mind.—Begone." Benson was retiring. He was called back. "Captain Vaughan has taken the road to Caversham—he cannot reach it to-night." "I overheard him saying, that he should have some delays on the road, and might complete his journey by late to-morrow evening." "It is very well," said Courtney; "his motions are so

rapid, that I must lose no time in writing to him, lest he should again change his residence as quickly as he has left London—leave me now.” He hung his head, and seemed to compose himself to sleep. Benson drew himself up in a sudden attitude of superiority and scorn, and slowly stalked out of the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
The very stones prate of my whereabouts,
———— While's I threat he lives,
I go, and it is done.”

Shakspeare.

THE year was declining, and as Vaughan rolled rapidly along the fine roads of Oxfordshire, he might have filled his eye with the alternate beauty of mighty woods wearing their last autumnal tints, and the little pastoral streams swelling into rivers, and rushing through fields and valleys that seemed planned by the very genius of landscape.

But his spirit was wearied and worn out by succession of bitterness, And

the sounds of the rustling wind that shook showers of foliage round him, and the general look of pale decay that touched the mountain and the valley, only formed a portion of his saddened feeling, a kind of attendant chime to the progress of a dejected heart from sorrow to the grave.

Some business which he had to arrange at Oxford detained him till the early nightfall of a November day, and when he had lost the glimmer of the town lamps, he pursued his road in total darkness. The night grew stormy, and the road seemed to have been suddenly cleared of all other travellers. Vaughan, wrapped in his cloak, and by custom careless of accidents by flood and field, was revolving the long series of his anxieties; when he found the carriage suddenly checked. He started

from his musing. In all the rush of the wind the sound of a low peculiar voice struck his ear. The post-boy was evidently struggling or parleying with some one. The night had suddenly grown intensely dark ; but Vaughan, with the habits of soldiership, sprang out of the chaise, and felt his way to the horses' heads. At the sound of his voice, a horseman plunged against him, and with an execration discharged a pistol full in his front.

At the flash the horse wheeled round, and burst away into the darkness. Vaughan, in the shock of the moment, could see only that his rider wore a crape, and that the animal was covered with mire and foam. Pursuit was impossible. As to the stoppage of the chaise, the driver could tell him nothing more than that a man, who called himself a London

traveller, had been inquiring the nearest way to Caversham at the Golden Eagle, where they had last changed horses. That he had followed them, and was trying to persuade him, as they reached the foot of the very steepest hill on the road, that he had mistaken his way.

Terror had made the post-boy stop; and the sight of the crape convinced him that the traveller was no other than the famous Tom Castles, who had been the terror of the country, till he was transported seven years before, but who was said to have returned and taken to the Oxford road, now that the gentlemen were coming up to their terms.

This was unsatisfactory enough, and Vaughan strongly suspected that the fluent describer of Tom Castles' achievements knew more about his present enterprise than he was willing to acknow-

ledge. But there was no resource. He got into the carriage; and his charioteer, possibly to whirl away any opinions unfavourable to his integrity, flogged his steeds into a gallop.

Vaughan tried to compose himself again; but a sudden pang made him writhe. He found his coat stained with blood; a ball had struck his arm, unfelt in the hurry of the struggle. But the pain grew keener still; the blood flowed rapidly; and he had but just seen the lights in the avenue of his home, when he fell and fainted.

CHAPTER XV.

Love is life's sunshine, and when most it shines
It calleth up the sullen-frowning clouds,
Wherewith to spoil its beauty.

Phineas Webb.

THE grief and terror of the household, when Vaughan was carried in speechless and streaming with blood, were beyond description ; but the wound was soon ascertained to be slight, and a few days subdued the danger.

But the fever of the mind subsisted still ; and his mother saw with silent misery the waste of life and hope in a countenance once so buoyant with delight and enthusiasm. Their conversations were long and sincere ; Vaughan

declared that with life, as offering a chance of future enjoyment, he had utterly done; the world was dark to him, and he now scarcely wished to see it brighten. His profession would henceforth occupy all his mind; the war had ceased, but he was determined to occupy himself in resolute and absorbing professional study, and to take advantage of the first opportunity of joining the service again, no matter where.

He gradually recovered; his health, shaken by even the ardour and exhilaration of the campaign, or by that rapid burning of the lamp of life so often felt by Englishmen in the brilliant climates of the south of Europe, was undergoing a slow but secure restoration. The coming of spring, that season which speaks with a music of its own, a sweet voice heard by no ear so deeply as the ear of returning

health ; the variation of studious hours by the pure and quiet pursuits of a country life ; the presence and conversation of that accomplished and intelligent mother—one woman in whose love he might trust without a possibility of being deceived ; the revival of some of those graceful pursuits to which he had devoted himself in the intervals of campaigning ; the poetry of Spain, the most romantic of all poetry,—its music, the most original and delicious—its landscape, unrivalled for richness of colouring and picturesque pomp of cultivation and nature, engaged him in no undelighted employ.

Other feelings of a still more exalted rank took root in this retired and thoughtful turn of his mind. From his mother's lips, the lips of an Israelite without guile, he heard, with almost a new-born

perception, the truths of Religion. From her life of trial, resignation, and confiding faith, he might have drawn its purest example.

Those truths were not made the matter of formal discourse,—they were not pressed by the zealous mother upon the struggling and reluctant conviction of the son. They came casually, the almost accidental excitement of the common things of the day. They were not talked of with a brow rigorously composed for the high subject, but as a portion of the general truths which make the sum of human happiness and wisdom.

Like the great Author of Christianity wandering with his disciples through the fields of Palestine, and turning the simplest objects by the way-side into the lesson of immortal knowledge—an

observation on some shape of the landscape, on a flower, or a cloud, or the last book that they had read together, often led them into an unconscious and lofty interchange of thought upon things above the world. With Vaughan this was new, and he felt in such hours something of that pure and vivid sense that might be imaged in a spirit just risen, and for the first time feeling its pinions wave in the expanse of Heaven.

With his mother it was graver, but not less sublime, the rich and composed joy of a spirit already accustomed to their possession, and prepared to move or rest as it pleased the Supreme.

In Vaughan's solitude those feelings sometimes took the shape of poetry, the natural form of all strong and solitary emotion. His verses were written merely as giving a channel to the overflowings

of his mind, the mere impress of the passing sensation, and were flung away in the moment after their being written. One of those was found, and treasured by his mother, as in some degree a proof of the general state of his mind:

“BEHOLD I WILL SEND YOU A COMFORTER.”

Thou Mightiest of the Mighty, come!

Thou drier of the bosom's tear,

Thou giver of the wretch's home,

When all his heart is withered here!

Is life but lent, to wake and weep,

Is love but like a summer gleam?

When shall I sleep the quiet sleep,

That rests unbroken by a dream?

My spirit still is dark and low:

Oh! for thy light to chase its gloom!

Oh! for the Christian's fiery glow!

Thou Mightiest of the Mighty, come

But in this powerful illumination of his mind there was nothing of the moroseness and affected peculiarity which

degrades religion into a sectarian sign, a sullen and repulsive denouncer of the natural pursuits and enjoyments of accomplished understandings, a melancholy figure of lank hair and grimace, meagre spiritual pride, and peevish habitual hypocrisy.

He wore no countenance in mourning; he anathematized no pearls round the neck of beauty; nor sermonized the village girls out of their courtships and cherry-coloured ribbons. He even set himself at little less than open war with a popular preacher of the sternest sanctimony, who had itinerated through the county, scattering denunciations of divine wrath against the entire family of village amusements, and marking his way by sallow faces, matches broken off, and an utter extinction of May games, dances on the turf, and the

regular Thespian troop, who time out of mind had delighted the men and maidens of the vicinage of Caversham with the loves of Juliet, the gaieties of Rosalind, and the griefs of the whole heroine tribe from Desdemona down to Jane Shore.

All inquiry relative to the highwayman who had given his wound was unproductive. He was recollected at the inn, as extremely anxious about the arrival of the chaise, as having shut himself up in his chamber during the few minutes of its remaining there, and as having set off at full gallop from the door soon after its departure. The post-boy was ready to depose that he was the identical Tom Castles, who had a few weeks before robbed in one post-chaise the three leading counsel of the circuit of their stock-purse and their

briefs against one of his accomplices; an act of gallantry which had spread his fame through the race of innkeepers, who disliked this economy of conveyance; and through the very considerable majority who, from fellow feeling, desired to see a man of honour and the road stand by his friends.

Vaughan's impression was, that he was a common marauder, whose pistol had gone off by accident; the inquiry was hopeless, and it was pursued no further.

CHAPTER XVI.

And now, my gentle bark, I bend thy prow
Wherever winds can breathe or waters flow ;
And now, my sail, I hoist thee to the air ;
And now, farewell, thou land of my despair.

Good Men and True.

CATHERINE'S name was mentioned from time to time in those lonely and interesting conversations, but it was without pain or passion. She was looked upon as the mind might look upon some remote and lovely being of history, whose errors and charms were to excite human sensibility no more. Vaughan spoke of her as he would of the dead ; with a fondness incontrollable by time, but with the melancholy fondness of the grave.

But the flame only slept ; one evening his mother, in adverting to the Peninsular campaign, mentioned Mordaunt's arrival, and the sudden result of his too candid narrative upon the Courtney family and Catherine.

A flood of conviction burst upon Vaughan's mind. " It must have been the story of his imprudent friend that had bewildered Catherine's pure and generous heart. His faith stained, his pledges to her forgotten, what could she have done, but abjure him?"

He announced his intention of instantly setting out for London, there to demand an interview with Catherine, and clear up at least his own honour.

But this the more mature wisdom of his adviser opposed. That incomparable woman felt an instinctive dread of the scenes and struggles to which his

still precarious health, and his still vivid affections, might be exposed. To escape all disappointments, she entreated him to sound his way by a letter to Catherine ; and she threw into her request so much united reason and entreaty, that Vaughan at length complied.

The letter was answered by return of post, Vaughan grasped at it, but the name of Courtney on the corner was a death to hope. While he held it quivering in his hand, unable to open it, or cast it from him, his mother drew it away, and read as follows :

“ SIR,

“ I cannot easily express my surprise at your continuing to obtrude your correspondence upon Miss Greville. You have been already acquainted with her engagement to me, an engagement

which I have the gratification to say is amply sanctioned by Miss Greville and her friends. Your letter she has just put into my hands, with the *express* desire, that all further intercourse on this painful subject shall be forbidden.

“ Acknowledging you, Sir, as a connexion of my family, it is my personal wish to avoid all unnecessary irritation ; but I must take the liberty of suggesting to Captain Vaughan, that his comfort, or perhaps even his individual safety, may be best consulted by abstaining from all interference with the arrangements of Mr. Courtney’s family.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your most obedient

“ And very humble servant,

“ PHILIP COURTNEY.”

Mrs. Vaughan read the letter with

fear and indignation. Vaughan with stern composure. "You were right, madam," said he, after a long pause, and a repeated perusal; "I should have been exposed to circumstances unsuitable to honour; that unhappy woman might have been compelled to play the hypocrite; Courtney might have been compelled to hear of his villainy, and the lesson would have been thrown away. It is better as it is."

He walked to the window with the letter clasped in his hands. It was the wane of the moon, and as he stood gazing at the pale light, it fell round his form with a sad and spectral lustre. His mother's eye could not bear the sight, and she rose to withdraw him. He started round as she approached, and she saw his countenance covered with tears. He attempted to say something, but his

tongue failed, he laid his cold lips on his mother's hand, and hurried to his chamber.

He was up at sunrise, and when he entered the breakfast-parlour, he had even the glow of exertion upon him. "I have come to my true point at last," said he. "Lingering in England is idleness. Time flies, and if we cannot overtake it, we must follow it as fast as we can. I am about to leave England."

Mrs. Vaughan had contemplated this resolution, and had almost wished it; but its actual approach struck her painfully; she combated it. His bosom swelled, and he broke out into the whole disburthening of his harassed soul. "No—never will I dream of happiness within the borders of this land.—Better fly to India, to Africa, to any spot of savage or solitary life, to any

corner of the earth where I can be insulted, betrayed, tortured, no more.— I would not grieve you. I disdain the affectation of complaint. But those people have given me the cup of misery to drink,—and I have been forced to drink it to the last drop:—you must come with me—the Continent has a thousand spots made for the unhappy and wronged to lie down in, and forget the world and the things of the world. Yet why should I ask you to be a wanderer? I shall go alone.”

The love of England was strong in his mother's bosom; she might meet in other countries more than its tender and pathetic landscape, more than its quiet fertility, more than the romantic story that lives in its wooded mountains, and populous valleys crowned and ennobled by monuments of its

heroic times ; but where could she meet its security, its law, the dignity of its national character, or the purity of its national religion.

While she was anxiously attempting to decide, a note was brought to her.

“ Madam,

“ Captain Vaughan’s life has been once miraculously preserved. But the first escape is no security for the future. He has an enemy, of whom he has no suspicion ; and this enemy, the last man who ought to seek his life. Let Captain Vaughan be cautioned against walking unarmed towards night-fall. This notice comes from a concealed friend.”

There was no name to this alarming intimation ; it had been thrown into the

avenue. The mother's heart was in an agony of apprehension, but her scruples on the continental journey were extinguished at once. She tore the note, lest it might meet Vaughan's eye, and urge him to inquiry and hazard. Early on the next day the cottage was given up, and its inmates were on the road to Dover.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of all her hopes, the labour of her years,
What is her harvest ?—Sneers, eternal sneers.

Savage.

THIS had been Mrs. Courtney's most brilliant winter. Her new alliance had opened the circle which it had been the business of her life to penetrate, but which had till now been a circle of adamant. She moved among the stars of fashion, herself a luminary; and what she wanted in rank she made up in address, in display, and what the censorious would call the effrontery of fashion. Her handsome person was seen every where, - and was always conspicuous for splendour and singularity of dress

wherever it was seen; she played, and played high; she talked, and talked loud; her spirits were unfailing, and her smile was beyond all the power of weariness or vexation to subdue.

Nature had given her beauty, which Time had rather shaded before she could reach the true position for its triumphs; but nature had given her a powerful mind, which Time had only matured, and from which it had removed the last obstacle by taking away whatever heart she once had. She was now a bold, brilliant, dashing woman, whom men of a certain age followed, and whom women of all ages fled or feared; for she had wit, and the will to use it; and many a high-born insolent, and many an opulent *imbecile*, did homage to her supremacy of sneer.

But in all this triumph there was a la-

tent pang. In this full-blown elevation there was a worm ; and Mrs. Courtney, when after seeing her apartments cleared of her multitude of titled guests, and smiling the last of her dukes and princes down her glittering and flower-wreathed stairs, she closeted her lawyer, and, with an aching head and a racked frame, consulted how to meet the demands of her morning creditors, might have been thought to purchase her distinctions under a severe penalty.

Every inspection of her resources was less and less cheering ; her income had sunk with a rapidity that surprised even herself ; her expectations of repayment on the marriage of her daughters, for whom exclusively she professed that she mixed in the world, had failed ; a little scheme of a more personal nature, excited by the dangling of a super-

annuated Marquis, and kept long in suspense by the most active yet most cautious attentions of the handsome widow, seemed sinking into utter hopelessness; and what was scarcely less vexatious, the secret which she had kept with such dexterous care, had obviously become no secret to fashion.

Desertion and destitution were the prospect now before her; and in bitter reluctance she addressed a long letter on her necessities to Lady Lovemore.

The old feuds between Mrs. Courtney and her daughter had died away by their separation; but utter coldness had come in their place. Her ladyship was the bird sent from the family nest to wing her own way; and like the bird, she never winged her way back again. Mrs. Courtney, with all her fashion, was still untitled: her patrician daughter

was perfectly sensible of the distinction of ranks; and the plebeian mother shrank before the stern superiority of the handsome and haughty Lady Lovemore.

The answer to her letter was simple, but expressive. “The Countess Lovemore lamented that it was a rule which she had prescribed to herself, not to apply on matters of money to the Earl Lovemore.”

London was now no longer tenable. The season was in its full tide; but Mrs. Courtney suddenly discovered “that she had raked too much for her health, that her dear girls were right in entreating her, as they had long done, to sacrifice something to herself, and that Baillie would not be responsible for her constitution another week in the atmosphere of town.”

“Brighton, the next remove of fashion,

was prescribed ; and to Brighton the family cavalcade swept down before the week was closed.

Mrs. Courtney's eclipse made the talk of a day. Her embarrassments had long been the laugh of her thousand dear friends ; it was secret, but not the less sincere. The laugh was now loud ; and the superannuated Marquis detailed the story of his flirtation with the loudest laugh of all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Come to the woods, for there the nightingale
Sings to the moon ; or to the twilight shore,
And hear the seamen's songs, as in their ships
They slide along the mirror of the deep.
Night is the time for talk of gentle love.

Phineas Webb.

BEIGHTON is, as all the world knows, London in little. The sea is certainly rather more obvious than the Thames, and the South Downs are more sheep-covered than Constitution-hill. But in all else, in formality of brick, in chicanery of trade, in folly of the supreme bon ton, there is not a hair's breadth between the London in Middlesex, and the London on the shores of the Channel.

Mrs. Courtney's arrival caused a sen-

sation ; her entrance had been made in the most triumphant style ; her barouche and four, with its attendant equipages, freighted with her multitudinous establishment, had whitened the promenaders of the Steyne with more dust, and excited more curiosity in the hotel-world than had been known within the season ; and before she had well slept off the fatigues of her travel, she found her table variegated with the cards of all the *comme il faut* of Brighton.

Yet there was something more than suspicious in Mrs. Courtney's leaving London at this period. Hitherto she had never appeared before winter "with saddened breath had chilled the year." There were now but some half dozen of peers and their spouses, even the baronets were not in abundance, and the chief population of strangers was made

up of persons whom nobody knows. Lawyers and parsons, country gentlemen come to refresh themselves after the assizes, and the palpable obscure of citizenship. The London rumours had preceded the showy matron; several invalid exquisites, undone by the clubs, and driven by the remorseless persecution of their creditors out of town, had arrived successively with fresh relays of intelligence touching the fashionable extinctions, and Mrs. Courtney's had just furnished the promenade with conversation for the day. To see the heroine of the tale, to ascertain the truth of the facts, and to amuse themselves with the defection of the dilapidated belle, were the stimulants which crowded her levee on the Marine Parade.

But those who came to scoff, remained, if not to pray, at least to feel

that they were baffled. They found the lady of the mansion in the highest animation. Every thing round her wore an air of elegance. Her daughters, dressed *à la Parisienne*, sat in an accumulation of all the superfluities of accomplished taste and costly expenditure. The Sevres flower-vase, the harp, the morocco volume, the richly embossed Album with its golden lock, to be opened by none but the hand of the most tender amity; the jewels which there had not been time to put by, and which lay in their embroidered cases for the envying eyes, and fond temptation of their dear detesting friends, all combined to effect the victory. But her daughters were merely satellites round the superior star. She discussed London with such brilliant nonchalance, and laughed at all that she had left behind with such

dexterous poignancy, that she satisfied the general circle at once, of her having broke through the rules of the season from the mere capricious power of a leader, and that to provoke her ridicule might be attended with peculiar inconvenience ; in short, that to be Mrs. Courtney's friend might be much pleasanter and more politic than to be her victim !

The matron, disgusted with her Marquis, had now determined to exert her energies for the disposal of her daughter Seraphina, who was already verging on the time when, to speak it tenderly, the natural rose yields to the artificial. For Martha, all exertion seemed useless ; she had protested so sternly and so often against the folly of giving up her freedom to the whim of man, that she was looked on as irrevocably vowed

to single blessedness; Seraphina's romance was a perpetual source of her pleasantries, and she was rapidly rising into the rank of a *blue*!

Among the men who had most diligently attended Mrs. Courtney's *at homes* in Harley-street was Jack Flatter. He was presumed to be poor, and was treated with correspondent neglect; but he still made his way, and was even a favourite with the fair of a certain age. Youth fled him; and beauty turned away its smiles; no mother wooed him for her daughter, and no father gave him champagne to animate him into a proposal. Yet he still kept his ground, where bolder, and younger, and richer, and handsomer, gradually sank *hors de combat*.

Jack's secret was the faculty of de-

tecting female attractions. Where the less gifted eye would have been repelled by timely antiquity, or the rigid stamp of un pitying nature, Jack Flatter's connoisseurship found loves and graces, and, as a matter of principle, communicated his discovery to their possessors.

Jack declared, that in his time he had heard much of Scepticism, but had never met with any ; that a few minutes' application to the understanding produced the most perfect conviction, and, for his part, he believed that of all female qualities stubborn doubt was the most rare.

He had been an occasional visitor at Mrs. Courtney's for some years, and had there indulged himself in the charitable pursuit of persuading the antiquated into youth, and the deformed into beauty. This indulgence to the

sex he however varied, as it suited his circle, by the most scornful opinion of the general human race; and his knowledge of the unsuspected sides of character gave him the most peculiar powers of anatomy.

But at the bottom of all this olio of compliment and contempt, Jack had some fragments of the original good-nature, which had made him a dupe, and sent him stripped of his patrimony to sneer at the world in revenge.

Mrs. Courtney's distresses were not the less pursuing, because she had fled from them to Brighton. The new display by which she had been compelled to signalize her *entré*, and abash all those "troops of friends" who would have been charmed to see her driven out of fashion, had already increased

her embarrassments in a formidable degree ; as a last resource, she sent for Jack Flatter, and closeted him.

Here she threw off all disguise, which she knew would have been no disguise to his penetrating eye, and plainly and with many a bitter invective on the tardiness of titled male flirts, the malevolence of the town, and the merciless persecution of creditors, pronounced, that unless something little short of miracle should fall in her way, she was absolutely ruined !

Flatter had sat with his elbow on the table, and his chin resting on his hand, looking at the lady's agitated visage. His own did not move a muscle. She paused breathlessly, and, as if hope might live in his answer, asked, " Whether he did not think that she was totally

undone?" He calmly replied, "Totally."

"What then is the resource?"

"None: except——"

"Your exception! out with it at once. I will do any thing."

"Then, retire from this idle struggle to keep yourself in a rank above your means; abandon this heartless pack, whose understandings, motives, and principles you know, and knowing, despise; feel that you have lived long enough for their paltry envy, their low jealousy, and their reluctant and contemptible admiration."

The handsome matron listened with something of a sigh, her countenance fell, and she asked in a subdued tone, "How was all this to be done?"

Her adviser still sat with the same unmoved look. His answer was—

“ You must retire from London finally, and for ever ! ”

She raised her fine eyes to his countenance with a glance of resignation ; but just above him was a mirror, and there those eyes caught a glimpse of a countenance much more interesting to her contemplation. It looked upon her in all the charms of handsome matronage ; even the partial trouble that sat upon its brow, seemed to give it but a more touching right to conquest. That single glance overthrew her philosophy ; and Jack Flatter thenceforth reasoned no more. He had now found that Scepticism was not altogether lost to the world.

“ Retirement,” said the lady, with a smile, “ yes, by all means, nothing could be so delightful to all my tastes ; but,

my dear sir, what right have I to plunge my daughters into the wilderness?"

"Oh, very true, none in the world," said Flatter, yawning and rising from his chair. He at once resumed his old tone. "Oh yes, infinitely fine girls, every thing on their side. Whom will they have? They would be, as the poet says, 'the cruellest shes alive, to leave the world no copy.' But I must absolutely be gone."

"No, I must absolutely detain you a moment longer. You know every soul, good and bad, here. The whole tribe of the witless, the wealthy, and——"

"The matrimonial.—Why yes," yawned Flatter, "our population here is various and silly; and they do marry from time to time. We have the people about the pavilion——"

"Pah, they have nothing but their epaulettes."

“ Well, we have the marquis, — a widower, — a politician, and confessedly the most captivating *rouè* of the race.”

“ Absurd, — let him marry his tailor’s daughter, and pay his debts.”

“ Then, let me see, we have the colonel, a brilliant fellow in his way, the very prince of projectors ; come down to build a bridge from Brighton across the Bay of Biscay.”

“ Ridiculous ! But are we reduced to this muster ? Have we nothing more original in our Curiosities ?”

“ Nothing ; our remarkable men have died off to the French coast, from a principle of delicacy ; for knowing that a prison was their natural destiny, they have preferred a foreign one ! And there, I am told, with the usual habit of the English, they have absolutely raised the expenses so high, that living in gaol

will be extremely difficult to their successors. But let me see,—you, I presume, disdain the Yorkshire Baronet, Sir Peter Pudding, the choicest specimen of a country productive of the best horses, the most dexterous rogues, and the most unequivocal fools within the limits of the land.”

“ Detestable ; he might indeed be well enough for a husband ; but what would he be for a son-in-law ? ”

“ Right, he would make a miserable flirt for you ; a man of fashion and figure is indispensable to a handsome mother-in-law ; and as to poor Pudding, ’pon honour, I don’t think that he could say a tender thing to you for his life. And as to waltzing, saints preserve my dear Mrs. Courtney from the horrid experiment ! I saw him at it the other evening. He was the most perfect imitation

of a dancing bear. And his countenance had, I assure you, not the slightest tendency to destroy the illusion. But there's Gordon; the Gordon——”

“ I detest the name—I have recollections.”

“ Yes, possibly. But, my dearest widow, all detestation of names is unpardonable, except in one of the two instances; where a lady, tired of her own, desires to exchange it for a husband's; or where, tired of the husband's, she desires to get rid of the name, in the idea that it and the man will go together. But the Gordon is really a superior animal; heir to twenty thousand a year, a future baronet, and as handsome as gambling, champaigne, and late hours, can leave any man. He would make a passable, easy, careless, husband for your daughter, but, and this is clearly

the principal point, he would make an incomparable *cicisbeo* for you."

In the course of the conversation it was ascertained, that this Gordon was the elder brother of Julia's husband; a showy wanderer through fashionable life, easily attracted, and easily lost. It was Mrs. Courtney's policy, that her acquaintance with him should be commenced in the most unsuspecting manner; and this was contrived by the experienced ingenuity of Flatter.

Gordon's curiosity was gradually excited by descriptions of Seraphina, who, hitherto absorbed in some personal objects which loved the twilight, had been scarcely seen. Gordon came, was fêted sumptuously, was surprised by the discovery that "relations so interesting should have been at once so near, and have so

escaped his knowledge." Seraphina's delicate and romantic beauty pleased the eye of this man of dissipation, wearied with the glare of high life ; and Mrs. Courtney looking forward to brighter prospects, recovered her smiles, and launched out into additional expense ; nay there were moments when her "strong imagination saw all but a *crown* dropping upon her head," and her hand swaying the sceptre of Brighton !

CHAPTER XIX.

They come, like sacrifices in their trim,
And to the fire-eyed maid of smoky war,
All hot and bleeding we will offer them.

Shakspeare.

AFTER some months of wandering through the south of France, Vaughan and his mother had fixed their residence within a few miles of Bourdeaux. The Garonne flowed under their windows, the hills behind were covered with the garden and the vineyard of that delightful region, and before them lay the city, and the sea upon the blue horizon. Here the weary spirit might have rest, and sorrow might grow calm, and anger

might be turned to forgiveness, and all but love be forgotten !

Vaughan was a patriot in the truest sense; but his generous spirit had been bruised, and he felt that England was yet no place for him. He looked forward to long retirement. But one evening, as he was riding towards Bourdeaux, he observed a military courier with a peculiar look of anxiety and haste, stop at one of the village post-houses to change horses. Some accidental delay had occurred, and the courier stormed with more than his national impatience, and burst out into a tirade against all the post-masters on the face of the earth, whom he declared to be to a man in league with the devil, and he added, emphatically, with Napoleon besides ! The horses were at length put to, and as he stepped into the cabriolet,

he pronounced, with the importance of an official big with a state secret, that "such news as he then brought would bring blood and battle among them." The horses were set to their speed, and the courier flew to Bourdeaux.

Vaughan rode on to the city, and as he reached the heights above it he could perceive an extraordinary bustle among the shipping, boats continually communicating with the shore, and evident preparations to put to sea. Couriers were dashing out in all directions, and a regiment of dragoons which had been quartered near his village, had mustered, and overtaken him on the road. He was on terms of intercourse with the officers, but they knew, or affected to know, nothing more, than that they had been ordered to take up their quarters close to the gates; the privates smiled with

French familiarity at his queries, and it was palpable, that whatever might be their conception of the public bustle, it was no source of sorrow.

During the night the agitation obviously increased. No one slept ; the peasantry gathered in their vineyards and villages ; fires were seen on heights where no man dwelt ; and signals by horns and musquet shots were passing through the plain. A thousand rumours were in the general ear. “ An English fleet had burned the shipping at Marseilles.”—“ The Russians were again in full march, by order of the congress [of Vienna, and had already entered France.”—“ The Spanish army had returned to the Pyrenees, and were laying waste Rousillon with fire and sword.”—“ The King of France had

been assassinated, and a revolution had broken out in Paris."

Vaughan quieted his household as well as he could, satisfied his mother that there was no immediate danger, and remained at the window of his chamber contemplating the lights on the hills, and listening to the alarm-bells of the villages. The moon was at the full; and the serene light which she threw over the lovely landscape on the banks of the river, contrasted with the signs of public tumult and threatenings of war, presented to his mind something of the image of Providence pursuing its course sublime and calm, and shedding its unwearied light on a world of passion and crime.

His vision was disturbed by distant murmurs, followed by the trampling of

many feet; and he saw soon after moving over the ridge of a neighbouring hill a multitude of a strange and motley description; some in uniform, some on horseback, who seemed to direct the route, the remainder peasantry, but all armed with the pike or the musquet. In different parts of this immense column, small flags were displayed from time to time, and their waving produced a low sound of applause.

As they descended the hill, the multitude divided among the narrow lanes of this thickly-intersected country; a detachment passed near Vaughan's cottage; they moved on singing a rude chorus; to his surprise he recognised the Marseillois Hymn. The detachment was brought up by a troop of what might be rustic videttes, and their

leader carried one of those flags which Vaughan had observed on the mountain. It was the Tri-colour!

Shocked and alarmed at what he looked upon as the direct breaking out of civil war, he turned from the casement, flung into his trunk such matters as might be necessary to a speedy removal, and watched with his pistols beside him till dawn.

The detachments had re-united in the plain, where they formed a vast column evidently under military guidance, and moved on to a range of hills on the north, where they halted. The summits almost instantly sparkled with innumerable fires, and Vaughan could have thought himself once more campaigning in Spain; there was the same serenity of sky, the same fragrant air, the mountain covered with the same

rich vegetation, the vineyard, the white cottage, and there too were the sterner signs that had so long told that in the midst of all the bounty of nature, there was the perverter of all, that great curse of mankind, a thousand-fold the substitute for all their other scourges—WAR.

The morning's intelligence was more distinct. "Napoleon had landed, he was now at Lyons, he had defeated or drawn over all the troops which had been hitherto marched against him; and last night three-fourths of the garrison of Bourdeaux had gone off hoisting the tri-coloured cockade." Those were the men whom Vaughan had seen marshalling the peasantry, themselves chiefly retired veterans of Napoleon's armies, and to whom his coming was as the sound of the trumpet to the war-horse.

The news now came crowding on

them in still more authentic shapes. "Napoleon was marching on Paris.—The Bourbons were preparing to defend the capital. The English were flying, to escape a repetition of the odious treachery by which they had been entrapped so many years before." But not the least interesting part of the news to Vaughan was contained in a letter from his late colonel, telling him that he was called again into service, and that his regiment was under orders for Belgium.

This was a summons which he had no right to decline. He made his way to the north of France, sent his mother under the escort of an English family across the Channel, and joined his regiment, where he was received with the welcome of a distinguished comrade.

Vaughan's heart still turned to England; but the hurried preparations for

the great struggle which was to decide the European sceptre, and the harassing marches through a broken-up country perpetually traversed by troops of all services, and about to become the seat of war, prohibited all regular correspondence; and the first letter which arrived from his mother was evidently only one of many, which, more than probably, were in the hands of some roving Hulan, or resting quietly in the *debris* of some baggage-waggon.

CHAPTER XX.

Here is her letter, writ with bitter words.
This should be blood, not ink. Gonzalez, see,
How sharper than the dagger's point, than gall,
Than the keen falchion's edge ; how heavier far
Than iron manacles, a few sad words
May smite upon the heart.

Phineas Webb.

THIS letter was of a nature to awake all his feelings, if they had slept. " I mentioned in my last," it began, " my surprise at Philip Courtney's marriage. Yet I will own, that notwithstanding the prejudice which I had imbibed against his young wife, principally from her unlucky choice—"

" Unlucky," mused Vaughan, " heartless—guilty—these would have been the appropriate terms."—" There is yet some-

thing about this graceful woman, which renders it almost impossible to deny her one's esteem."—"Esteem," cried Vaughan; "she forfeited all claim to the esteem of man or woman, even of her miserable and culpable husband, when she consented to receive him; even with my mother she is Catherine no longer."

"I have before mentioned to you," continued the letter, "that having to seek a new abode, and my passion for a country life being as strong as ever, I have at length fixed myself in the village where your uncle resided, as the next most familiar place in my recollection. The Courtneys have just come down here for the summer. Young Mrs. Courtney's affability and unaffected sweetness——"

"Sweetness! ay, so it is," murmured

Vaughan, with a sad smile of recollection—"have won all hearts." Chance has thrown them often in my way, and I cannot deny that I have caught the general feeling."

Vaughan laid down the letter in sudden disappointment. "Are all women then alike, all destitute of firmness, young and old; all vacillation, incapable of retaining even a just resentment?" He returned to the letter. "Especially," observed Mrs. Vaughan, "as I have strong grounds for believing that she was urged, nay, even compelled to this ill-assorted union by her father. I grieve for her situation; I grieve for the companionship which she has chosen; it is plain that she is not blind to the dark and repulsive features of her husband's character."

"Had she not time to think of this

before?" cried Vaughan, at once grieved and offended; "was not their acquaintance long enough. If she could be blind, she was blinded by vanity, by inconstancy, by ambition, and deserves to feel."

The letter concluded thus—"She has made many advances towards an intercourse, which I have hitherto avoided; but I will frankly confess, that in this I am making a sacrifice to your injured feelings. My dislike of Courtney continues unabated; but my heart would yet lead me to his very interesting bride, and I wait only your approval."

"Can all this be?" cried Vaughan, giving way to an agitation which he had so long laboured to subdue. "This woman has destroyed my happiness. Yet for some trivial taste is sacrificed that honest pride and justified disdain which would have renounced them for ever."

He wrote a few lines in reply. It was the briefest and least affectionate letter that he had ever addressed to her. "Be it as you will, my dear mother, I can have no right to object to any friendship which you may wish to form; but I implore you, that your hand may not be the first to open those wounds which can hope for an effectual cure only by my ceasing to hear of those who have inflicted them. And now," said Vaughan, as he closed the letter, "my account with the world is completed. I knew that this marriage was to be. Why does the blow fall thus heavily! Was I mad enough to hope—could I think that a touch of human feeling would have arrested her at the very altar! Catherine—traitress! I have pronounced your name for the last time!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Death has been here, and with his armed heel
Has trod out noble lives. Look on that face
That was the merriest rover in our camp,
He sat but yester-even in my tent,
And wagered on our years to come. Look there,
Another ! loose his morion. In that eye
Was yesterday a light that laughed at fate,
And now the dust will shroud him.

Phineas Webb.

THIS was the memorable period of Waterloo. It would be idle to repeat the details of a day familiar to the English heart, and which will stand before the eye of future ages among the noblest exploits of manly counsel and heroic valour.

The greatness of the stake ; the renown of the two leaders, themselves

the guiding spirits of European war ; the character of the armies meeting to decide the military eminence of the two most warlike nations of the earth ; all placed Waterloo in the foremost rank of national glories.

But when the glow of combat was over, the scene was one of undissembled pain and sorrow. Every man had lost some friend ; and as the line, which had advanced to complete the rout of the French, returned through the field, the most bitter recognitions occurred in the trampled forms and ashy faces that they had seen rushing forwards a few hours before in the ardour of assured victory.

As Vaughan's regiment moved down towards the highway, in rear of the memorable Château de Goumont, he was roused by the voice of an officer,

whom a soldier had just lifted on his shoulders to carry to the hospital.—“Have we gained the day?” were the first words which he uttered on being released from a pile of dead. “Ay, captain,” said the soldier; “and only that I saw where your honour fell, you would have been with many a fine fellow that this day has cost.” The officer clasped his hands with a faint effort of triumph, and relapsed into insensibility.

The soldier laid his gallant burden on the ground in despair, and, standing over him with folded arms, made a rude recital of his virtues. “There goes as good an officer as ever wore the king’s red coat, and as kind to his company as he was bold at their head. It is long before we shall see your like again, Captain Gordon.”

Vaughan sprang from the column, and

found in the silent subject of this honest panegyric, his friend the husband of Julia!

Assistance was, of course, now promptly given. Gordon, still insensible, was carried to the village, and Vaughan insisted on attending him in person. As he looked on the pale features of this handsome and high-minded man, the thought of Julia's desolation struck bitterly upon his mind, and he involuntarily pronounced her name.

Gordon started from his insensibility at the sound, and, in a feeble and bewildered utterance, murmured, "Who talks of Julia? I am dying. She has but one friend on earth, and he is about to leave her."

"She has another," said Vaughan; "one who has pledged himself never to desert her."

“ ’Tis Vaughan ! ” said Gordon, sinking back exhausted, but not unconscious, on his pillow. “ Come near me,—nearer still ; I have scarcely power to speak above a whisper ; it is of vital consequence that you lose not a word of what I am about to say. You remember your promise to me, Vaughan, when we parted ; I was a true prophet. See what I am now. It was a kind fate that sent you there to make that promise, and here at this hour to fulfil it.”

Vaughan tried to give him hopes of speedy recovery. “ No,” said Gordon, struggling for utterance ; “ I must die !—I have faced death before,—but life is dear to me now for the sake of my wife and child. Here,” drawing from his bosom two letters, “ take these ; the one is a farewell to my Julia, the other a last appeal to the heart of a father.”

A silence ensued, which Vaughan could not trust himself to break. "I wish," said Gordon feebly, "that these letters should be delivered by your own hand. You will see England again."

"I had thought," said Vaughan, his heart swelling with the bitter recollections associated with the sound, "to have seen England no more; but, rely upon it, happen what may to me, these letters shall be guarded as sacred,—confided to none but such as I may safely trust, or retained in my possession till I can deliver them myself. In such a cause I would go to the remotest ends of the earth. I will come face to face with your inexorable father."

"You have a warm heart, Vaughan," answered Gordon, wringing his friend's hand; "it renders the tongue eloquent, and I could hope all things from your

noble energy. My father must give way; his resentment will not extend beyond the grave."

"Impossible," cried Vaughan, with a burst of feeling, "if he be a man."

"It is plain, Vaughan," answered Gordon, with a dejected smile, "that you have still something to learn of human nature. I too once formed hopes, of which time has since shown the fallacy. Fondly as I loved Julia, I would not have yielded to the generous romance of her nature, and condemned her to such a life as she has since known, had I not placed some reliance on my father's subsequent forgiveness. But he has a stern and haughty nature. Heavens! when I saw Julia, once the life and spirit of an admiring circle, banished to her hopeless solitude, and felt that my father was at that hour sitting in his

proud mansion with almost boundless opulence at his command, surrounded by a train of pampered slaves, every one of whom was more an object of his consideration than his exiled son, the thought has stung me deeper than I would tell to any other ear."

The surgeon entered; and having dressed his wounds with the air of one to whom such scenes were familiar, took Vaughan aside. "He will not die to-night," he observed; "life is stronger in him than you think; but if he has anything to communicate, let it be told to-night."

"Are we again alone?" said Gordon, looking anxiously around; "then listen. It is of consequence that you should know those with whom you have to deal. I have a brother, who, strange as it may seem, neglects no means to fan

the family irritation. He is extravagant, selfish, and splendid——, a profligate of the first celebrity; my father's idol from his birth; the chief bond of union is perhaps the resemblance which we can trace in others to ourselves."

"And shall I find this brother too?" said Vaughan; "tell him how and where I left you, and subdue him if I can?"

"No," said Gordon, "he is heartless. Obtain a private audience of my father; 'tis your only chance. Yes," he repeated, "it is poor Julia's only chance! From her own family she can have no hope. Their wretched extravagance must end in ruin."

Vaughan soothed him. "The pledge which I have given is too sacred to be forgotten."

“ Thanks, a thousand thanks,” said Gordon ; “ I will bless you as long as I live. I had forgot,” he said, a transient flush mounting to his hollow countenance, “ how short can be my term of gratitude ; but I leave those behind who will bless you for me. ”

The drums beat. “ Farewell, Gordon, for to-night.” “ Farewell in this world—for ever,” said Gordon, in a broken voice, turning to his pillow.

CHAPTER XXII.

The spear is in his side. A surgeon, ho!
He breathes,—there's colour in his cheek ; some help.
Now his life's tide has ebb'd again,—he sinks,—
He's dust and ashes.

Phineas Webb.

THE following morning, at day-break, the army was in march on the traces of the French. Vaughan snatched a moment to fly to the cottage. There, to his dismay, he learned that Gordon had been worse during the night, and that he had been conveyed away by a waggon of the commissariat, but where no one could tell. Further investigation was now impossible. His regiment, of which, by its loss of officers, he was now major, and in command, was already in ad-

vance, and he was forced to put spurs to his horse and follow.

The second capture of the great disturber of mankind once more appeared to proclaim long and universal peace; and Vaughan found himself again a wanderer.

His first inquiry was as to the circumstances of Gordon's death; but they totally eluded him. His next was how best to fulfil those offices which he had promised to his gallant and unfortunate friend:

England was the last place which he could have desired to revisit; but Staffordshire, in which the Gordon estate lay, was sufficiently remote from the abode of his treacherous friends. Even had it been otherwise, it was a sacred duty. "If those Gordons are such as they have been represented to me,"

said Vaughan, as he drove up the long and ancient avenue, "it is no easy task that I have undertaken ; but I will not suffer myself to be repelled. Unhappy Julia ! I am your last, your only friend, and I shall be strong in the cause of your beauty and your affliction."

At the door of the magnificent mansion stood an equipage apparently constructed for the comfort of an invalid. On Vaughan's sending up his name, he was led through a suite of splendidly-furnished rooms ; the crowd of liveried idlers, the antique statues, the paintings, the whole stateliness round him, struck deeply on his mind, burdened with its heavy mission. "What a contrast to the hovel in which my brave friend spent his last hours of pain," thought Vaughan ; "yet this was the roof under which he was born. Were

there no yearnings in a parent's heart?"

"Tell Sir William Gordon," said he to the valet, "that Major Vaughan desires to see him on business of consequence." The servant delivered the message, and threw open the door of a large apartment still more magnificent than any that he had yet seen. It was partially darkened, and he looked round for the superb lord of all this luxury.

He heard a faint voice inquiring "If the gentleman was come?" and advancing to a corner of the apartment, thrown into almost total obscurity, found the master of the mansion in a sallow and feeble invalid, wrapt in flannel, and a martyr to the complicated diseases of high living.

"I understand, Sir," said the Baronet, "that you have done me the honour of

calling on me relative to some matters of importance."

"Of the highest, Sir," returned Vaughan, "to you, as a man of feeling and honour,—as a father."

The old man raised his head, and fixed a dim and half-sleepy eye upon the speaker. He made a slight sign to him with his hand to go on.

"You have had, Sir William, a son, who was an honour to his profession, to human nature, a most generous, gallant, and noble-minded man. This son is now beyond human injury or kindness; he has died the death of a soldier." Vaughan's voice trembled, and he was silent.

His hearer passed his shrivelled hand across his forehead; then, stifling his emotion, said fretfully and at intervals: "Sir, I was acquainted with all this

before.—Why have you thought fit to disturb my declining days with bitter recollections?—I did my duty by my son; he was determined to take his own way; he had his own romantic principles.—I might have sent him into parliament for the county, but he refused to pledge himself to my friends; I might have allied him with the peerage, but he refused the lady, the most opulent match in fifty miles round; he determined to choose for himself,—and well and wisely he chose. What was to be done with him?”

Vaughan attempted no answer against those common complaints of authority and prejudice; and the old Baronet continued, with many interruptions of feebleness:

“Major Vaughan, you have probably learned to think me a fretful and tyran-

nical father. I had sent that young man offers of reconciliation, even since his marriage ; to those he had never replied. I had even proposed to exert my interest for him in his profession, much as I was adverse to his adopting it ; all remained unanswered, in contempt of my wishes and feelings. What was to be done with him ?”

Vaughan expressed his utter astonishment, and was about to mention the circumstances which made him conclude that some singular misconception had occurred ; when the door was thrown open, and a tall and fashionable figure made his abrupt entrance.

“ My son, Reginald Gordon, Sir,” said the old man. Vaughan was struck by the hasty and suspicious glance which the younger Gordon cast alternately at both. After a brief and embarrassed

silence on all sides, Gordon expressed his happiness at seeing "the friend of his lamented brother," but wished that his father, from his state of health, could have been spared all mention of business.

"I deeply regret, Major Vaughan," he continued, "that the unhappy turn which my brother took has been too long a source of pain to his family. On my father's spirits it has hung with the severest effect, and it will be, I think, most gratifying to all concerned, that you and I should together arrange his debts and other affairs."

As Vaughan listened to the smooth tone of this speech, which was evidently directed more to the invalid than to him, he had also looked upon the speaker's countenance, and found that it was one which could not bear his

look. The haughty expression had sunk into shyness, and the habitual sallowness of dissipation had burned up into the colour of shame.

Vaughan's generous feeling spoke out in sudden disdain. "Captain Gordon," said he, "left no debts upon his memory, but a heavy debt upon the honour and heart of his family. He has left a wife, worthy of all his love and of all their respect, and a child whose rights it will become them to acknowledge."

The old man raised his head, and listened with interest and surprise. His son was palpably anxious that the development should go no further, and repeated his declaration of the most profound interest in the fate of his sister-in-law.

"There is but one point more on which I must clear the character of my

gallant departed friend," said Vaughan emphatically. " My intercourse with him was unfortunately brief; but even during that period I was present at his writing, even during the hurry of preparing for service, successive letters, expressing every sentiment of a manly and filial heart. Yet he was painfully conscious that he had an enemy somewhere; and, but for the fate which removed him from us, not too soon for glory, though much too soon for his friends and his country, he would at this day have been breaking up the whole system of insidiousness, cruelty, and guilt, which had made him an alien to his father's house." He fixed his eye on the younger Gordon, who busied himself in playing with a pointer at the fireside.

" He wrote, you say," said the Baro-

net, "why did I not know this before—before he died?—Unfortunate son, and more unfortunate father!" Then turning to Vaughan, with a hurried voice, "Wrote in your presence, sir?" Vaughan bowed assent.

The old man's feeble countenance filled up; the eye, clouded and pale with long exhaustion, distended, and shot flashes of rage. He rose on his feet by the impulse which seemed to have given new life to his entire frame, and in a voice of stern wrath exclaimed: "Then, sir, I have been scandalously deceived. Treachery has been at work! I have long suspected that some base and villanous spirit, nay perhaps under my own roof, was busied in sowing dissension between me and my son. I had employed that young man," pointing to Gordon, "to ascertain the criminals; but they were too well

concealed, we were both baffled. But your declarations, sir, have roused me again, and if there is truth to be found on earth, or power in man to punish fraud, hypocrisy, and heartlessness, the actors and abettors in this foulest of all conspiracies shall be the sufferers."

The younger Gordon had listened without lifting his eyes till the close, when casually raising them, he caught Vaughan's levelled at him with an expression that could not be mistaken. His haughty spirit caught fire. He started from his chair. "Do you menace me, sir," said he to Vaughan, in a tone of arrogance and anger. But before he could reply, Gordon had turned to his father. "Am I, sir, the object of this unnatural suspicion?" "Heaven forbid!" said his father, as he drew back, and the passion of the moment vanishing,

sank upon his pillows. "Then, sir," said Gordon, "I presume that we are entitled to expect some evidence of this extraordinary duty and attention on my brother's part. Let whatever determination to interfere with, nay, to intercept his letters, exist, all could not have been intercepted—"

"Not all," returned Vaughan, taking Gordon's letter from his pocket. The brother drew back in unequivocal surprise. "This one," continued Vaughan, "it was my friend's last request that I should personally deliver to his father, no matter in whose presence I should find him, and under what unhappy delusion he might have been retained."

He put it into the hand of the Baronet. "I have now, sir," said he to the younger Gordon, "done a sacred duty, in perfect disregard of what may be

thought of my doing it." "Disregard, sir!" repeated Gordon haughtily, and approaching him.

"Understand me, Mr. Gordon," pronounced Vaughan, firmly. "Disregard was my word. I am not much a provoker of altercation, and least of all in the family of a man for whom, living and dead, I felt and feel the interest of a soldier, and a relative. But I insist on, at least, one letter being allowed to remain in the hands for which it was intended; I insist on justice being done to the widow and child of my friend; and I insist on nature and reason being suffered to make their way with that unhappy and much-abused old gentleman."

He looked back on the Baronet, who was reading the letter, with his face bathed in tears. Vaughan would not obtrude on a sorrow that had so much

of repentance. He bowed sternly to Gordon, and left the house ; desiring the valet to inform his master that he should remain in the village for the rest of the day.

In the evening he received a note from Gordon, couched in the most conciliatory terms, regretting the misunderstanding which had occurred, and pledging his father, who was unfortunately too much indisposed to have the pleasure of personally seeing Major Vaughan on the subject, to the most ample provision for the “ interesting survivors of his ever-to-be-lamented brother’s family.”—Vaughan’s task was now done ; and with a lightened heart, he ordered the postillion to drive to his home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"We weep, we smile, we love, we marry, die!
Then comes the solemn, sable pageantry.
The mute, the hearse, the mourners, and the plume,
To close our giddy transit in the tomb."

THERE were some embarrassments to Vaughan, connected with his mother's choice of a residence in the neighbourhood of his late uncle's house. It was now Courtney's, probably his fraudulent disinheritor, certainly his bitter enemy, and as certainly the triumphant husband of the woman who had insulted and abjured him.

As the village came in view, Vaughan was pressed by painful emotion. The objects by the way-side were familiar,

and their familiarity was connected with unhappy remembrances. Halston Hall was visible from the road: He gave one almost involuntary glance at it, and was surprised to see its windows closed.

“ Courtney, at least, is not here,” he exclaimed, and felt his bosom lightened. The postillion suddenly drew up to the road-side. “ I must stop, sir,” said he, “ for the grand funeral, that is coming round by the trees. I think it is from the Hall yonder.”

Vaughan's attention was deeply stirred. The procession advanced dimly through the winding road, made doubly dark by the shade of the trees and of the declining day.

Alone, in the first mourning coach, with folded arms and gloomy brow, sat the man whom he had hoped of all mankind to shun, his treacherous relative,

Philip Courtney. A fearful suspicion, that he found impossible to suppress, struck across his brain at the sight. A long train of private carriages followed. The cottagers were all standing at their doors, and not a few, as it passed them, turned aside and wept. Vaughan could bear no more delay. He leaped from the chaise, and, nervously agitated, asked who had died? "Bless you," answered a peasant, "'tis plain that you are a stranger in the village, by that question. 'Tis young Mrs. Courtney, the sweetest lady eyes ever looked on. She had been pining and drooping, one may say, almost ever since she married; but her troubles are over now, poor thing, and not a dry eye will follow her to the grave."

Vaughan rushed wildly forwards after the funeral. "I must have one more sight

of her," thought he, in bitter sorrow. "Yes, Catherine, you loved me to the last. Your pride urged you to complete the sacrifice, and your heart has broken in the struggle. A villain divided us in life, but his malice can extend no further." He followed through a path of the grove leading directly to the church-yard. He felt his limbs fail; there was a mortal sickness at his heart, a mist was on his eyes; the world seemed to be gliding away from before him. He stopped in a transient stupor; from which he was aroused by a voice calling repeatedly and wildly on his name. He looked up—he saw standing before him the image of her whom he mourned!

He continued gazing, but spoke not. His mind was in the state of one who felt conscious of some mental delusion,

which he yet wanted the power to shake off. He caught hold of her hand. It was thin and cold, but it returned his pressure. "She lives," cried Vaughan, with a burst of exultation. "By what miracle." He gazed upon her. "It is, indeed, a pining and drooping flower that I see, but it is enough for me that she lives." A painful recollection rushed to his mind. "Yet, she can never live for me. This hand has been pledged to Courtney. We have met for the last time.—Once more, farewell!"

"Never, never!" cried Catherine, detaining him with the gentle force of tears. "Stop, dear, rash, cruel Francis. Though it were to see me die on this spot before you, never shall you leave me again, till all is explained. You shall not deny me a second hearing. Oh! how much evil might not a first

have spared? I have deserved your resentment Francis, but not, not your scorn. I have endured a period of lengthened misery. But you turn away; you think that I deserve to be abandoned; and you desert Catherine Greville!" Vaughan, overcome by doubt, fear, and love, repeated the name, "Your's, and your's alone!" sighed the lovely and impassioned girl. Vaughan pressed his burning lips on her forehead. "That word has pronounced you mine for ever. All is forgotten, Catherine, my first, my only love. This moment, this confession, repays me for a world of anguish. We will part no more."

Catherine's heart was too full for words, but she stood looking up in Vaughan's manly and ardent countenance, while a glow passed over her

own, such as might have animated it in other times, and placing her hand in his, with a devotion and utter confidence which seemed to pledge their union for ever; "I have a long and strange explanation to make," at length she said; "but this is not the place; come with me to the house of her who has been my best and truest friend."

"Be my guide for the future; henceforth I have no will but yours," answered Vaughan; and Catherine, with a returning smile, the first which had illumined her countenance for many a long day, put her arm within his with the frankness of former times.

The cavalcade which had plunged him in such needless sorrow was now returning.

"Whom have they just carried to the grave?" asked Vaughan. "I see the

error under which you have lain," answered Catherine; "but once more let me remind you, that this is not the place for explanation." She looked anxiously behind her. "There is one, the first in that sad procession, whom we ought not to meet just now."

"Lead on," said Vaughan. "I am too happy not to be submissive, the veriest of your slaves, my sweet Catherine. Lead on." She led him through by-paths of fragrance and dewy freshness to a cottage of romantic beauty. At its door stood his mother. He rushed into her arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Come now, be strict to the letter, tell it out ;
I'll have your blushing sins, your smiling hopes,
Your sunshine wanderings, and your nightly dreams !
There's not a moment in Love's calendar,
But I will bring to book.

Phineas Webb.

THIS meeting, though not altogether one of surprise, as Vaughan had written immediately on his landing, was yet, under such unlooked-for circumstances, one of unlooked-for pleasure. After the first emotion had in some degree subsided, his mother would have left the betrothed pair to their interchange of confidence ; but Catherine opposed her departure. “ We can have nothing to say to each other,” she said, “ which

your interest in both has not entitled you to hear."

Mrs. Vaughan thus urged, willingly resumed her place, and Catherine commenced her recital by the events of Vaughan's absence, the story told by Mordaunt, the advantage which Courtney had taken of it; and the conversation which she had overheard between Philip and his mother, and which, from all that had since occurred, she had reason to believe planned for that express purpose. "But still," said Catherine, her eyes filling, "hope, uncertain and fleeting visitor as it was, lingered with me; and I wrote, yes, I wrote such a letter as I deemed would be sufficient to shew the unhappy impression that my mind had received, and flattered myself that your reply might be of a nature to remove it altogether. But, Oh!

Francis, your long, and as I then thought, contemptuous silence, confirmed my worst fears.”—“ That letter, that luckless letter, Catherine,” interrupted Mrs. Vaughan, “ had you been but warned ; had you but informed me what you were about to do, and suffered yourself to be guided by an older and cooler experience, it would never have been sent, and this long period of causeless anxiety had all been spared.”

“ Pity me, feel for me,” said Catherine, raising Mrs. Vaughan’s hand affectionately to her lips ; “ think, by what artifices I was assailed, of what treachery I was the object ; yet, even then, tortured by suspicion as I was, I still hesitated ; for to find that I had not been forgotten was my last hope on earth ; and then, that heart of all treachery, Philip Courtney, stepped in, and put

into my hands a letter, which he affirmed to have been written by a mutual friend in Spain, announcing your actual marriage, Thus irritated, thus bewildered, urged by my father's remonstrances, entreaties, commands—(forgive him, he knew you not), is it to be wondered at, that I was driven to the very verge of that precipice, from which I still shudder to look down.”

“ But,” said Vaughan, all his soul hanging on the words which she pronounced with such pure and lofty feeling, “ knowing Courtney as you did, his spirit of deceit, the low and subtle malevolence of his nature, and with such a motive, such a prize in view—”

“ Is there a reproach in that expression?” answered she. “ I could never have thought him base to the depth of that baseness of which he has

lately proved himself capable. I thought him driven by early extravagance to some meannesses which he had since regretted, but do me the justice to acknowledge that his vices are disguised by an appearance of sincerity, a plausibility of kindness, well calculated to deceive. Yet he never possessed my friendship, never even my good opinion; and I should have turned in scorn from all that he could have urged, had not the testimony of your friend Mordaunt compelled me to believe. He had no design in this; he could know nothing of the misery that it must cause. Where two of such opposite characters agreed in the tale; where friend and enemy united, might not the firmest confidence have been shaken, the fondest heart have felt itself abandoned and undone. But on the morning of our agonizing and fear-

ful meeting in my father's house, of which I still tremble to think, one word, one look from you, outweighed all that I had heard. From that hour I renounced Courtney for ever. My father knew not what to believe; but he laid his commands on me no further; he left it to my guilty relative to vanquish my reluctance; but what could overcome it then? I was convinced that you had been calumniated; and with such a conviction, what motive could have bribed me to accept of any other human being?"

"Yet how shall I acquit Mordaunt of the wretched carelessness, that produced so much suffering?" said Vaughan.

"We all have our faults, and that levity evidently inherent in your friend's character is one not easily eradicated; yes," continued Catherine smiling, "we

all have our faults, and yours was impetuosity. Oh, had you not fled from me in such disdain——”

“I was, I own it, rash, unfeeling, mad; but I wrote to you, Catherine; I wrote, soliciting any excuse that you might offer; my reply was a haughty billet from Courtney, assuring me that your marriage was irrevocably fixed. That hour pronounced sentence of my banishment from England, as I then thought, for ever!”

“I never received that letter,” interrupted Catherine; “he must have intercepted it. It was easily in the power of a bribe. His undisguised rage when he found that all was at an end between us; his subsequent and speedy marriage with another; and, lastly, the full exculpation which your mother has within these few days had an opportu-

tunity of making, have at length completely opened my father's eyes to Courtney's character."

"This, then," said Vaughan, addressing his mother, "is the bride of whom I heard, and in whom my jealous fancy could see no other than my own false Catherine."

"The letter," said Mrs. Vaughan, "which I had previously written, and which by some accident you never received, would have prevented this mistake. I had heard on my arrival in England, that the marriage between Courtney and Catherine was broken off, and had been followed by this heartless step. Of course, though compelled to meet Courtney subsequently on business, it was not a subject on which I could enter with him. There was a touching melancholy about his young

wife, which I traced to her unhappy connexion, and, spite of my dislike, I might say, my abhorrence of him, I was not unwilling to offer her such resources as she might find in my acquaintance."

"Unfortunate Amelia!" said Catherine, with a tear to her memory, "she deserved a better fate. How she married Philip Courtney is to me inconceivable. I am convinced that she never loved him; but educated in country life, she might have been dazzled by his showy manners. She had been, in former days, a schoolfellow of mine; and when she married, gave me many pressing invitations to her house, which I was of course compelled to refuse."

"Yet I find you here, my love," said Vaughan.

"You find me, indeed, here," re-

turned Catherine, in a tone of deep feeling; “ but remember where you saw poor Amelia Courtney borne to-day, and pardon me. The knowledge that she had made a man of dissipated habits and debased principles her husband, came upon her but too soon ; it preyed like a worm upon her heart ; consumption seized her delicate constitution. When she gave up all hope of life, she wrote, imploring me not to carry my resentment against her husband so far as to deny her the consolation of seeing me on her death-bed. Your mother offered to receive me, and give the opportunity of visiting my unhappy friend. Our meeting produced an immediate explanation, and she was preparing to write to you, when your letter announcing your intended return

to England was received. Amelia Courtney died last week ; and it is as a tribute of my esteem and pity for her that I wear this mourning."

"He married her for her fortune," said Mrs. Vaughan ; "but I am inclined to think, that in his eagerness to secure it, he has over-reached himself. There has been some delay in the settlements ; her father is a cold and cautious man ; and now that the unhappy Amelia is no more, I should think that Courtney is undone."

"And now for less painful topics," said Vaughan ; "there is an introduction to which I look forward with no small anxiety ; to General Greville."

"I shall return to town immediately," answered Catherine ; "Mrs. Vaughan and yourself must accompany me. There is but one drawback on the pleasure I

should anticipate. Julia Gordon and her child have been for some time our guests. The account of her husband must have by this time reached her. I own I dread to meet her sorrow."

"No more sorrow for such a day as this," said Vaughan; "where you go, I shall follow,—where you are happy, I shall be happy. The world has bright days in the midst of all its trials; and, if we find it too dark, we must only make a little fairy world of our own, a world of faith and fondness. You smile at my romance, Catherine; but true love has the wand of an enchanter, and can turn the very sands of the desert into gold!"

CHAPTER XXV.

But now I am returned, and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires.

Shakspeare.

It was now the general wish to return to town as soon as possible. Catherine anticipated the pleasure which her father's heart would receive at the sight of her restored happiness; and, he had suffered so much uneasiness almost from the very hour of his arrival, and had always expressed so affectionate a solicitude on her account, that she felt it her first duty to relieve his anxiety. She wrote a few hasty lines,

announcing her intended return, and the happy circumstances with which it was connected, but deferring more minute explanation till their meeting. General Greville was perfectly satisfied to await the appointed time for the final disclosure; for he had seen enough of the extent to which Catherine's indignation, when she deemed it just, had power to carry her, to believe that Vaughan would not have been able to effect such an entire reconciliation without having adduced strong evidence in his favour.

On their arrival, his future son was received with a cordial and manly welcome. "I am glad," said the General, "that the affair has turned out as it has; and Catherine, now that I see your choice, I find it easier to forgive the obstinacy of your resolution." Vaughan

bowed. "I had but this girl, Major Vaughan, and pleased myself with the idea of installing her husband, whoever he might be, in the rights of the son whom Fate had denied me; but ladies, my dear Sir, are capricious beings at best, and I was beginning to fear that she would never give me the opportunity."

"Spare me," said Catherine, playfully silencing him; "this gentleman knows the full extent of my caprice already; let the past be forgotten, or he will absolutely think that I could not have lived without him."

"Nay, never blush, my girl; there is no shame but in denying our honourable feelings. I see by your eyes, before your lips have told it, that you are about to pledge yourself to an injured, not a repentant lover,—and this is as it should

be. The man who, after trying to gain the affections of a confiding and innocent woman, abandons her, is among the worst evils of society; he is answerable for every misery of her life; his shame ought to be branded on his brow for a mark to all mankind. I could extend no mercy to heartlessness."

"Ah! Sir," said Vaughan, "could you think, that one who had once ascertained the value of this hand could lightly throw it by?"

"No," said the General, feelingly; "you sought and won her, in her orphan, her most unprotected state,—and deserve her now. You have had some trials, but they are past, not to return, if the possession of ample means and a father's blessing may avert them from you."

"There is but one shade on our

felicity now," said Catherine, "which is" (and she sighed) "that all are not equally blest; my poor cousin Julia!"

"And why Julia?" returned the General; "is there but one man in the world, think you, that a fair lady can fall in love with?"

"I see too plainly," said Mrs. Vaughan, "that you have yet to learn the unhappy tidings of Gordon."

"Gordon!" repeated the General, laughing; "why, has he been playing the coquette? But come, I hate long explanations; the shortest way to set all at rest is to let you judge for yourselves;" and, opening the folding-doors, he displayed to their astonished eyes a scene which fixed them to the spot; Julia by the side of her husband!

"There, there," said General Greville, his countenance beaming with that

benevolence which was the spring of every action, "what melancholy tale have you to tell to these good people, Captain Gordon?"

Vaughan advanced towards him, and shaking him most cordially by the hand, "I am at a loss how to express my astonishment, my sincere joy, at this unlooked-for event."

"Yes, yes, satisfy his curiosity by all means," said the General, impatiently; "explain, if there be anything to explain. For my part, I see nothing very surprising,—nothing but what is very natural in this business. Gordon was wounded, carried off by our commissariat, and intercepted by a party of French fugitives, who made free with his cart, and left him to recover in a French cottage, or die as he pleased."

"The state in which you left me, my

dear friend," said Gordon, " was such as sufficiently to justify your present amazement. I have little to tell in addition to the General's story ; as you see, chance and constitution enabled me to combat the great enemy. I was slain at the War-Office, but kept alive by an old French peasant and his wife, and was recovered time enough to reach England almost as soon as yourself."

All was now harmony in this united household. When a few days had elapsed, Vaughan, remembering the devices which Courtney had employed, and dreading any farther obstruction on his part, implored the General to permit him to fix a day for the marriage.

" Not so fast, " was the answer ; " this is no every-day marriage, and shall be celebrated in a style befitting the occasion. You must allow the lady at least

time to consult her milliner, and me to assemble my friends. As for Courtney, he has by this time perplexities of his own sufficient to keep him at a distance ; or, if he should approach, he shall learn a lesson addressed more to his feelings than to his understanding."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The spirit that I have seen]
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape.

Shakspeare.

MRS. COURTNEY was still a leader among the leaders at Brighton. Her parties were brilliant, and her daughters were belles ; she herself had foresworn matrimony, but she was only the more in fashion ; and the mightiest of the mighty had found it desirable rather to soften her rivalry than to contest her power.

She felt, however, that she was playing a desperate game ; and, with the spirit of despair, she determined that, if

it was her last, it should be worthy of her fame. Gordon, Seraphina's declared lover, had been absent for a week, called away by "most pressing business" to Staffordshire. In a few days after his departure, the *Morning Post* announced that "Sir William Gordon, of Gordon Castle, Staffordshire, long an invalid, having abruptly received the intelligence of the death of his gallant son, Captain Gordon, of the 72d, had died of the shock within a few hours; and was succeeded in his title and estates by his fashionable and accomplished heir, now Sir Reginald Gordon, Bart."

Jack Flatter was instantly consulted. His advice was short and stern. "Leave this paradise of fools; in another week you must be undone. I see your predicted ruin in the softest smile of your fondest

Marchioness. As to your new Baronet, if you want to find his match, marry him yourself."

The handsome widow looked at the sarcastic visage of her adviser, as Faust might have looked at Mephistophiles, in ridicule, surprise, and fear.

"Do you want to know more?" said Flatter.—"Why then I will tell you that this Gordon will be no son-in-law of your's. He is a heartless, subtle, and unprincipled pursuer of his indulgences.—You may rejoice in your daughter's escape."

"And in my own beggary, I suppose," said Mrs. Courtney, with a sigh from the depths of her bosom. "You know, or you must be told, Flatter, that my principal creditor has given me but one week's respite on the strength of

this match. Gordon will not, dares not break it off. I am even persuaded of his attachment to Seraphina."

"Gordon," was the reply, "is attached to Seraphina, probably enough, just as he is attached to every pretty woman that passes before his eye. But he has restraints, bonds, arrangements—in short, my dear widow, insist upon no more of my knowledge."

"Devil," exclaimed Mrs. Courtney, with a bitter smile, "why am I to be tantalized in this manner? What encumbrance has he upon his inclinations? what control now? what necessity to follow any will but his own?"

"All those questions may be answered with more ease than, for your sake, my handsome Mamma, I should desire. His *necessity* arises from having

anticipated his income, and being tied up from mortgaging; which will prevent his paying his *encumbrance*, a bond of twenty thousand pounds; which will prevent his getting rid of what you call, and fairly enough, the *control* of your former friend, Champetre's friend, every body's friend, the fair philanthropist, Lady Diana Prudely!"

Mrs. Courtney was thunderstruck, but soon partially relieved herself, by the simple mode of doubting Flatter's authority.

"Never lay that flattering unction to your soul. My authority is unquestionable. I had it last night, in peculiar friendship, from one of the greatest scoundrels of my acquaintance, a fellow who, of course, on the mere strength of his reputation, makes his way into the very first circles. He was a rejected

adorer of her ladyship, and in mere *delicacy* feels it a duty to thwart her further infidelities. In two days Gordon will be here, in two days her ladyship will arrive, bond in hand, payable either in money or marriage. In the next four and twenty hours, the baronet will be Benedick, the married man."

"What has become of Champetre," said Mrs. Courtney, with the quickness of one to whom a sudden scheme has suggested itself.

"Lounging at Worthing in the fondest security. The death of her ladyship's husband had given a new turn to his thoughts, and her jointure became an object of his affections. She abandoned the colonel on that happy occasion, and winged her way to the Continent; there her reputation had preceded her, and there she sustained her reputation. Re-

turning through mere *ennui*, she dropped into Champetre's way, as a pearl is said to drop into the jaws of an oyster. The bond with Gordon is an affair of this continental trip, and her ladyship, sick of Champetre's exquisite stupidity, and stimulated at once by avarice and ambition, is watching your new-fledged baronet as the hawk watches the pigeon."

Mrs. Courtney made a note in her memorandum-book.—“ Now, Flatter,” said she, “ I must have no more lectures. My mind is made up on two things. The first is, to have this baronet for Seraphina; the next, to expose, to extinguish, this monopolizing Lady Diana, whom I thoroughly detest, and whom, indeed, as a mother, and as a friend to public principle I—”

Flatter laughed out, and she left the sentence unfinished.

The result of the consultation was, that for the double purpose of pre-occupying Sir Reginald Gordon, and of fixing him irrevocably to Seraphina, a fancy ball should be given on the night of his arrival.

The ball was given, it was superb. Seraphina was in peculiar captivation. Even Martha, to whom the country air had given pretensions, on which Mrs. Courtney had commanded her to lay siege to the soul of a retired Indian general, whose body had vanished under age and the liver complaint, figured as a belle on that night of triumph. Sir Reginald Gordon was present, and in the highest possible animation. Neil Gow's band, that ubiquitarian troop, whose harps and fiddles seem to meet us at all corners of the isle at once, was in full harmony, and the votaries of

Terpsichore, as the papers say, were 'tripping it on the light fantastic toe,' when Gordon and Seraphina withdrew from the quadrille, loaded with admiration, and exhausted with mutual delight, into the refreshment-room.

They were followed by Mrs. Courtney's vigilant eye ; but she would not intrude. She knew that in matters of the heart, moments like this were invaluable ; that love speeches and lemonade had a thousand times gone together ; and that half the booby lords and lisp-ing countesses of her circle had overcome their horror of declaration under cover of ices and bonbons.

The dance went on. Supper was announced, and the multitude rushed down in real appetite and pretended sport to *feed*. Mrs. Courtney reserved a place next the throne for her future

son. But he did not come to claim this distinguished honour. He was sought for, but in vain.

The fair Seraphina was now missed by her mother's inquiring eye. She too was sought for in vain. In the midst of her perturbation, Mrs. Courtney saw Flatter making his way towards her through the lines, that kept their places with the most resolute discipline. He took the vacant seat. "Gordon is gone off," whispered he.

"With Seraphina? — heavens!" returned the matron.

"No; with Lady Di. as I warned you. She had an interview with him within these ten minutes. He was reluctant. She produced the bond; the menace produced its effect in the shape of an order for the Baronet's travelling carriage; they are already on their way

to London, and after that, wherever her ladyship's fancy may please.

“For once I have outwitted her ladyship,” thought Mrs. Courtney, with anticipated triumph, “were they followed?”

“That is more than I can tell, unless it was by the gaze and laughter of all the mob of the hotel.”

“But what can have become of Seraphina !”

“There my knowledge fails me.”

Morning dawned on Mrs. Courtney sleepless, and with it came a letter. It was signed Seraphina, *Comtesse de Valincourt*, and “implored her dearest mamma's forgiveness for having given way to the impulse of a too tender attachment to the most interesting of men, a noble *emigré*, next heir to a duchy, under the old *regime* of France. He had met her

in her wanderings on the cliffs ; their minds were congenial ; nature and sentiment had decreed that their hearts should not be divided ; and as they dreaded her repugnance, she had given way to the Count's entreaty for a private marriage."

"Fool!" exclaimed Mrs. Courtney, "you are a beggar for life!" She rang the bell, it was unanswered. She rang more violently ; one of the footmen at length came up, breathless, and looking alarm, she inquired what had detained him?

"Sir Reginald Gordon, Madam."

"What of him?—Order a post-chaise."

"He is dead, Madam ; and they are now bringing him down the Steyne to the York, Madam."

“ Has the man lost his senses? Dead! impossible! How could it have happened?”

“ Shot by Colonel Champetre, Madam. The Colonel followed Sir Reginald on the way to London; they say on account of his wife; and Sir Reginald is now coming back a corpse in the chaise, Madam.”

Mrs. Courtney was overwhelmed. This was her doing. Determined to counteract Lady Diana, she had sent a sarcastic note to the Colonel, acquainting him with her ladyship's intention of engrossing Sir Reginald.

Champetre was a coxcomb; but the language of this bitter and contemptuous note stimulated him to revenge. Her ladyship was missed almost immediately; and the Colonel mounted his horse, and followed full speed to Brigh-

ton. There again he was baffled. He followed again, and overtook the fugitives a few miles on the road. He demanded that the lady should be given up instantly. Her ladyship resisted with screams. Gordon, who would have been rejoiced to get rid of her on any other terms, could not abandon her under the appearance of force. Accordingly, he accepted the Colonel's defiance; and scorning the quarrel, and despising the object, he took his stand. Their pistols were discharged together. A ball went through Champêtre's knee, and lamed him for life. Sir Reginald was shot through the heart, and dropped dead without a word.

There is a remnant of human feeling in the sternest bosom of woman. Mrs. Courtney, proud by nature, and hardened by the habits of her ambitious and

struggling life, was still woman; and she could not reflect on the mischief that she had done, without a keen and remorseful pang. The blood of this wretched profligate, cut off in the very flower of his sin, was on her head. Years might have brought him a change of mind; accident or mercy might have taught him penitence; but now her unhappy hand had as much broken off his hope of better, as if she had fired the pistol that extinguished him in the midst of all his evil.

Seraphina's letter met her eye. She tore it in mingled disdain and anguish. Her knowledge of the world told her of what materials a stolen match with an "interesting *emigré*" was composed. She looked upon Seraphina as duped by some travelling valet, who had assumed

his master's title, and as, of course, utterly lost to her and to society.

From Martha she expected but little relief in this sea of troubles. Her contemptuous and sneering spirit was no pillow for the bruised feelings of her clever and unhappy mother. From Lady Lovemore all hope was out of the question. A separation had been already determined on by her antiquated Lord, and the wrongs of both parties had been laid at the door of her who had brought this ill-suited couple into the bitter bonds of matrimony.

To Julia how could she apply? There was a time when, in her haughty selfishness, she would not have hesitated to demand from this injured daughter all that she could give; but that time was past; a quick and deep sense of the

return due to her long abandonment of this gentlest and most sensitive of all her children, had come upon her, and she flung away the pen that had just commenced a letter of reconciliation.

Of her son she had long ceased to receive any tidings. The last which she had heard, even in general rumour, represented him as totally ruined, and struggling to keep up appearances by means whose result might drive him from society altogether.

Martha found her in the midst of this overwhelming depression. The intelligence of her sister's elopement had already spread through the town, and she had returned laden with the sneers and galling condolences of the whole beau monde. Her indignation at Seraphina's conduct was boundless. The idea of elopement, of which she spoke as at all

times degrading, unfeminine, and childishly romantic, was "doubly base in this time of family perplexity."

The day passed away in solitude; and as the evening fell, and twilight was dropping that propitious veil under which tears and blushes are equally concealed, Martha proposed a walk on the cliff, as a balm for the head-ach, which had oppressed both during the day.

The air was refreshing, and the London groups wandering to catch cold from library to library; the sounds of the broken voices, and exhausted pianos, which they delight in as harmony; and even the rattle of the lootables, amused Mrs. Courtney with a rude picture of the world of May Fair. She even began to think, that excepting that there were fewer titles, less ruinous

fooleries, and less bitter scandals among the idlers before her, the difference was but little.

Martha was less amused, glanced at the hour, complained of the sea-breeze, and returned to the house for a more protecting shawl. Mrs. Courtney lingered on the cliff, half forgetting her delinquencies and their fruits, in the bustle of the Steyne.

Jack Flatter passed her, and suddenly returned with a look of surprise. "What, widow, you here still? I had thought that Brighton was to weep the vanishing of its brightest ornament."

"Have done with this style. You shall see me in that character no more. To-morrow I leave Brighton; and, but let it be a secret with you, England, for heaven knows where."

"All inconceivable! It was but this

moment that I called at your house ; a post-chaise had just left the door, and I was told by the fair soubrette, with a most gracious smile, that her mistress had left Brighton in that post-chaise."

"There must be some new villany in this. Will you come with me?" said the lady, hurrying to the house.

"To the world's end !" said Flatter, with his habitual bow and tone.

There Mrs. Courtney found a note from Martha, "lamenting the severe necessity under which she found herself of attending her husband Captain Montague, who had received an unexpected order to join his regiment ; she having been married to him that morning, and keeping her marriage secret only by his positive commands. She now implored forgiveness," &c.

Mrs. Courtney held the note in her

hand in a state of stupor. Flatter took it from her. "Montague!" exclaimed he; "rascal! the very fellow whom I mentioned to you as having given me the information about Champetre, a showy scoundrel enough; but the maker of his own commission; in short, a notorious black-leg. Where could he have met your daughter?"

Mrs. Courtney's heart smote her. It was she who had brought him into the house to assist her plot against Lady Diana. The pretended Captain was not worth a shilling; the house was showy; the mother presumed to be still rich; the daughter was disgusted with single-blessedness, and determined not to be the only unmarried one of the family. The swindler saw a hope in at least the connexion; and Martha was made his sixth wife living.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This is a fellow, Sir, that would draw blood
Were you mail-proof. He hath an eye that glares
With fiery memories. Gird on your sword,
Before you come athwart him.

THE month of preparation which General Greville's decree had pronounced had nearly glided by. It seemed to be a sort of understood compact between the now happy members of the domestic party, that Philip Courtney's name, associated with so many unwelcome remembrances, should be buried in oblivion; and by degrees the apprehension which had once been entertained of further obstruction on his part had completely subsided.

One night, as Vaughan was hastening home through Park Lane, which, never a very frequented spot, was at this time unusually lonely, he found himself closely followed by a man, who began to accost him in a style and manner so peremptory, as seemed to imply that violence would be resorted to if his request were not complied with. Vaughan had no doubt that the fellow had robbery in view, and looked round to ascertain whether he should have to contend with one footpad or many. But they were still alone. Vaughan stopped, and demanded, why he followed him.

The man drooped his head. "I am a desperate man, Sir; made desperate by utter ruin!" was the reply; "nor do I suffer alone. My shame and guilt have involved a wife and two children. They must follow me to a prison; and

it may be well for them to find shelter even there, for this night they may have no other home. They must perish, or I must perish. Beware how you deny me."

Vaughan, moved by the despairing accents in which this was pronounced, said, " You take a bad mode of relief ; but follow me where I can hear what you have to say ; and if you prove not altogether unworthy——"

" Unworthy !" returned the man, impatiently, " then I have no hope. Have I not already told you that I am bowed down by guilt and shame ; but they, they for whom I plead, are innocent. Save them, and leave me to my fate !"

" Follow me," said Vaughan ; " but I repeat, that I must know more of you." And turning into the first coffee-house, he ordered a private room.

The waiter stared at the appearance of his companion.

“ Well,” said Vaughan, when they were secure from interruption, “ what further have you to tell.”

“ I have told all,” said the man, sternly; “ I have already said that I am reduced to the lowest poverty.”

“ And what can have reduced you to this extremity; you have not the appearance of a common mendicant; what has plunged you into this desperate career.”

“ Folly, waste, credulity mocked by false hopes, a villain’s airy promises, all have combined to work my destruction. I have appealed to none as I have appealed to you; the death of my children will be at your door if you refuse me.”

Vaughan was penetrated by the almost convulsive agony impressed on

every feature. "Take this card and this purse; see if what it contains be enough to relieve your necessities for to-night, and call on me to-morrow."

The man grasped the purse with the eagerness of a savage joy. He next glanced on the card; and, hurrying to the table on which a lamp was burning, he held the light full up in Vaughan's face, scanning his features with a look of wild astonishment. "This name,—that countenance!—can it be? Were my eyes blinded or my senses maddened, that I did not know you before? Is it Mr. Vaughan that I indeed see? When last I saw you, I was in the service of your relation,—more properly, your enemy, Mr. Philip Courtney. We met in an evil hour. I had known better days, wild and unprofitable perhaps,—but still not those of a menial. Now,

Sir, let me reveal a tale of iniquity. When you left England, you were high in favour with your uncle ; but your absence gave room to your enemy. He gained the ear of the old gentleman, then feeble both in body and mind. He slandered you ; his story was artful. But, in his hatred, he pushed his falsehood too far,—he overshot his mark. Your uncle, probably, had begun to suspect, from his very eagerness to wrong you, that there was villainy at the bottom. Whatever might be the reason, he died without altering the will, which had been a year ago made in your favour. My master, or rather my accomplice in many an act that I shall regret as long as I have life, was furious at the disappointment ; he instantly tried a scheme, for which you could

now bring him to a miserable end. You have heard of the previous will?"

"I have not merely heard of it, but have it in my possession," said Vaughan, deeply agitated with this variety of fortunate and painful intelligence.

"Then, Sir, the way is clear," said Benson; "the will by which Courtney has seized the estate is not worth the paper it is written on. It is a total forgery; I was, with shame I say it, one of the subscribing witnesses."

"Yet," said Vaughan, hesitating, and looking at Benson's gloomy countenance, with something like doubt expressed in his own; "has no pique against your late master instigated you to this? May I trust you?"

"You may," said Benson, firmly; "and the motive is plain. Courtney

had need of an agent in his scheme ; and he made choice of me, because he knew me to be undone,—poor, wretchedly poor, and felt that the money which he offered was a strong temptation. He cheated me like the rest ; he satisfied some trifling demands from time to time, but the stipulated bribe for my life has never been paid nor half paid. To-night my effects, such as they were, were to be the prey of my creditors ; my wife and children were to be driven out houseless. I went to Courtney, and laid my case before him ; but I had found him in an unlucky hour. You may have heard that he married some time since a reputed fortune, and buried her not long afterwards ; but her money had never been received ; on this night he had been at her father's house to demand the payment. The father, dis-

gusted, had spurned him. It was in this mood that I found him.

“He derided my misery, he denied my claims, commanded me from his presence, and, when I still lingered at the door, drove me out with a blow. I left his house, vowing never to return,—the blow fresh in my memory, and indefinite thoughts of vengeance in my head. Frantic, I hurried to a low gaming-house,—my last resource. I staked, and lost my last shilling. Despairing, I rushed into the street, and met with you, my deliverer. It was well that you turned not a deaf ear to my tale.”

Vaughan listened to this fierce confession with horror and astonishment. “Those things must be sustained by evidence,” said he. “Your testimony is strong, but——.”

“I am aware of my unhappy charac-

ter, Sir," replied Benson; "but I have served you before now. It was I that discovered his attack upon your life, and warned you of a second attempt; when you departed from England, my heart felt lightened of a load. But now, Sir, will you follow me? Courtney is at home. The charge must be made without delay; he leaves town to-morrow. Your very sight, in my company, will wring confession from him; he will know that further contest will be useless."

"If," said Vaughan, his generous mind shrinking from the painful interview, "I were sure of finding Courtney at home at this hour,—"

"If!" said Benson, fiercely; "is such a stake to be thrown away? Take me while I am in the mood, Mr. Vaughan; your fortune is in my power. If I chose

to recant my evidence, it is lost. Should Courtney try his temptation to-night, I may change my purpose; I may be doubly a villain by to-morrow."

"Go on," said Vaughan; and in silence they reached Courtney's house.

Courtney was alone when they entered; there was wine upon the table before him, and his flushed countenance and heavy eyes betrayed the nature of his refuge against uneasy thoughts. Vaughan looked at him almost with a sentiment of compassion. He could scarcely recognise the handsome and fashionable man whose society he had sought, and whose animated manners had introduced him so much into the circles of the gay and fashionable. Courtney started and turned deadly pale as he was announced. The unexpected sight of Vaughan, thus attended, opened

his eyes instantaneously to his danger; but still his former presence of mind did not quite forsake him. He attempted to stammer forth a feeble welcome, and even extended his hand with something like the familiarity of former days.

“It is too much, Sir,” said Vaughan indignantly; “I must be now aware of the deceit which you would practise upon me. It can avail you no longer. I bring a charge against you of so foul a nature, that he who has no means to disprove it, can never hope to hold up his head in the world again. But we are united by the ties of blood, Courtney. Agree to give up your ill-gotten possessions without a struggle, and I pledge myself that the transaction shall never be brought forward.”

“I scorn your contemptuous, your

pitiless mercy!" said Courtney, stamping with rage. "What is life without the means of sustaining it? Who would believe the tale which I might tell, that saw me thus despoiled, degraded, stripped of my last shilling!" He flung himself into the chair, filled his glass to the brim, and drank it off.

"I know the world," said he, in a low and sneering tone; "I know its tender mercies, and will never go forth in it again to meet the scorn, the insolent obloquy which awaits me there: but I have resources which will not fail me, and which not you, Sir, nor you, black and treacherous villain!" darting a fierce glance at Benson, "have heart enough to try or dream of."

He flung open the door, and rushed furiously by them.

"What can this mean!" exclaimed

Vaughan : “ have his contrivances been deeper than you were aware ? have you brought forward a charge which you have not the power to prove ? ”

“ No,” said Benson, “ it is altogether impossible. This is merely a bravado : he can have no document which my evidence would not turn to waste paper.”

The report of a pistol was heard. Vaughan flew up the stairs in horror, and burst open the chamber-door. His unhappy relative was stretched on the floor, a fearful spectacle ! Life was utterly gone. He lay on his back ; his teeth clenched ; his open eyes glaring with an almost living expression of despair. The pistol was in one hand ; the other had been instinctively struck upon his wound. The floor was covered with

blood. Vaughan turned away in anguish. Benson stood gazing, and unable to draw his eyes from the dead.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Now are our woes all come to pleasant ends ;
Our dropping tears are dried by sunshine smiles ;
Our wringing hands are laid on merry hearts ;
Our wandering locks that wore the cypress leaves
Shall now be braided with rich jewelry ;
Our voices, griefs' companions, shall be tuned
To silver harmonies that, like the lark,
Shall wake the morn, and then outwatch the moon,
More sweet and constant than the nightingale.

Phineas Webb.

Mrs. Courtney's establishment at Brighton now came under the hand of the law ; and her bijouterie gave a new subject, at once, for the admiration of the loungers of this classic and conversational spot, and for the florid eloquence of Pulpit, its celebrated orator, politician, and auctioneer.

Her spirit was broken : deserted by her children, foiled in all her personal prospects, insulted by the open ridicule, or worse, by the affected pity of her fashionable associates, she at length felt of what feeble and visionary materials the glories of high life are made.

Vaughan and Catherine were generous and feeling in their offers of kindness ; but she refused all pecuniary assistance, and with the trivial wreck of her property prepared to bury herself in some of the obscure and cheap villages of the Continent. Till final arrangements could be made, she came to London, and there shut herself out from all intercourse with society.

Vaughan alone was an exception, his sensitive delicacy, and noble ingenuousness, had won upon her, and with tears which he vainly sought to check,

she lamented the injuries which she had in her day of folly and pride, attempted to do him and his love.

She refused all knowledge of what was passing in the world, and it was only by Vaughan's representing the necessity of completing the business which devolved on her by the death of her son, that she expressed a wish for his opening the letters which had lain on her table for a week together.

One of these was from Lord Love-
more's agent, announcing his Lord-
ship's death, and the unexpected dis-
covery that he had been privately mar-
ried to a celebrated *danseuse* of the Vi-
enna theatre ten years before. The
true wife, who had been silenced by
the payment of a large pension, and the
perfect indulgence of her own modes of
living, had come to England on the

intelligence of her old lord's demise. The letter concluded with the agent's "most respectful regrets that he could not henceforth have the high satisfaction of honouring Miss Courtney's bills for the amount of her annuity."

"The next letter," said Vaughan, as he opened it, "is from your daughter, Lady Gordon."

"Close it again, my dear sir," said Mrs. Courtney, with a deep sigh. "From Julia I am determined to receive nothing, not even compassion. Her I treated with a severity, at which I now wonder ; and from her, now happy, honoured, and rich, I would rather die than receive services imbittered by the remembrance of my tyranny ; I must not disguise it, it deserves no other name."

"But this letter, I can perceive from

the first line, is neither of compassion nor of triumph; Julia is ill."

There is something in the parental tie, that however it may have been stretched, can never be broken. Mrs. Courtney's heart felt an indescribable pang at the sound. The world seemed to be forcibly torn away from her by the chance of such a loss. She seized the letter, and read it with breathless eagerness.

It was simple and expressive. An entreaty, that "as her dear mother would not honour her by allowing of her visits when able to make them, she would, at least, not refuse her dutiful and affectionate daughter the consolation of seeing her, when she could see her only on a sick bed."—The letter was finished by Gordon, who said that Julia was, from illness, un-

able to write any further, and implored Mrs. Courtney's presence to receive "perhaps the dying prayers of her child."

We must conclude our history. Julia had been seized with a fever, and on her mother's arrival in Staffordshire was in a state of danger that utterly subdued the remaining hardness of that proud and worldly heart. She knelt by her daughter's bedside, and for the first time for many a year offered up the mingled tears and prayers of contrition. Julia recovered; and her mother, still more softened by what she believed was an answer to her agony of prayer, imbibed at that bedside hopes and feelings, more sacred and consoling than we will here venture to define. Gordon, who had by his brother's death succeeded to large property, was ge-

nerous to this changed and bowed-down spirit; and his generosity had sought out even the fugitive daughters.

The fair Seraphina's fate had been already decided. Her Count was a smuggler from the thriving town of St. Maloes. In a fortnight after his astonished wife's introduction to her new relatives, a large circle of poissardes and contrabandists, the Count himself in a second venture to Brighton, with a freight of teas and brandy, went to the bottom in a gale off Beachy-head.

Seraphina, who had lived in perpetual terror in the midst of those Tritons and Nereids, fled on the very night that the news of the catastrophe sent this whole piscatory race, wringing their hands, and weeping their marine tears, down to the shore. She was now fairly in the way for adventure; and with

three five-franc pieces for her whole finance, and on foot, she must have perished in the cross roads of Normandy.

But the genius of romance watched over her. As she sat sleeping, through exhaustion and the heat of the rising sun, on the skirts of a thicket through which she had been toiling during the night, a stranger in an English travelling carriage was struck with her desolation. He stopped and spoke to her. Her surprise and delight at hearing an English voice, awoke all the roses in her cheeks: and as she told the story of her escape, tears gave the heightening which we are told makes beauty irresistible. The stranger was fine and fastidious, a man of fashion, and an invalid. The adventure interested him, and he liked the novelty of being interested about any thing. He liked the

courage which had prompted so pretty a creature to make her escape; and when she accepted a seat in his carriage on the way to Calais, which she did with a doubled blush, and as he thought a ten-fold charm, he felt himself more awake to life than he had been for some months before.

When they were about to part at the packet, the stranger found that he was less serene than became a hero and a philosopher. He attended the fair Seraphina to the pier, and made a parting speech. Seraphina thanked him with real gratitude. He gazed on her deep blue eyes, and the gaze was long. He pressed her snowy hand, and it was not withdrawn. He recommenced his adieus; but the packet was under weigh, and to complete his speech, he had no resource, but to leap in, and sail for England.

In a fortnight after, Seraphina was the wife of Arthur de Grey, Gordon's eccentric friend, and lord of the romantic Hertfordshire cottage.

Gordon procured a commission for Martha's husband, who had ruined himself by play; yet was not incapable of higher pursuits.

But of Vaughan and his Catherine what shall be recorded. Is there no love dream left among the young, or no love memory among the old?

FINIS.

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1811

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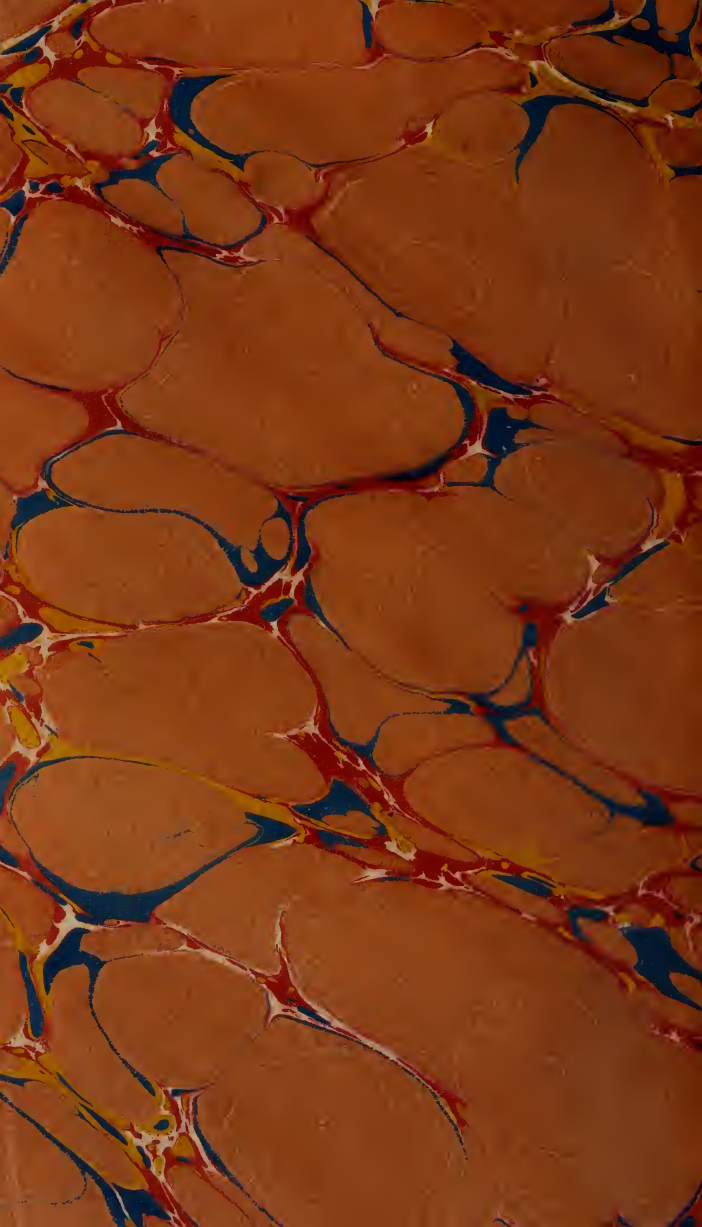
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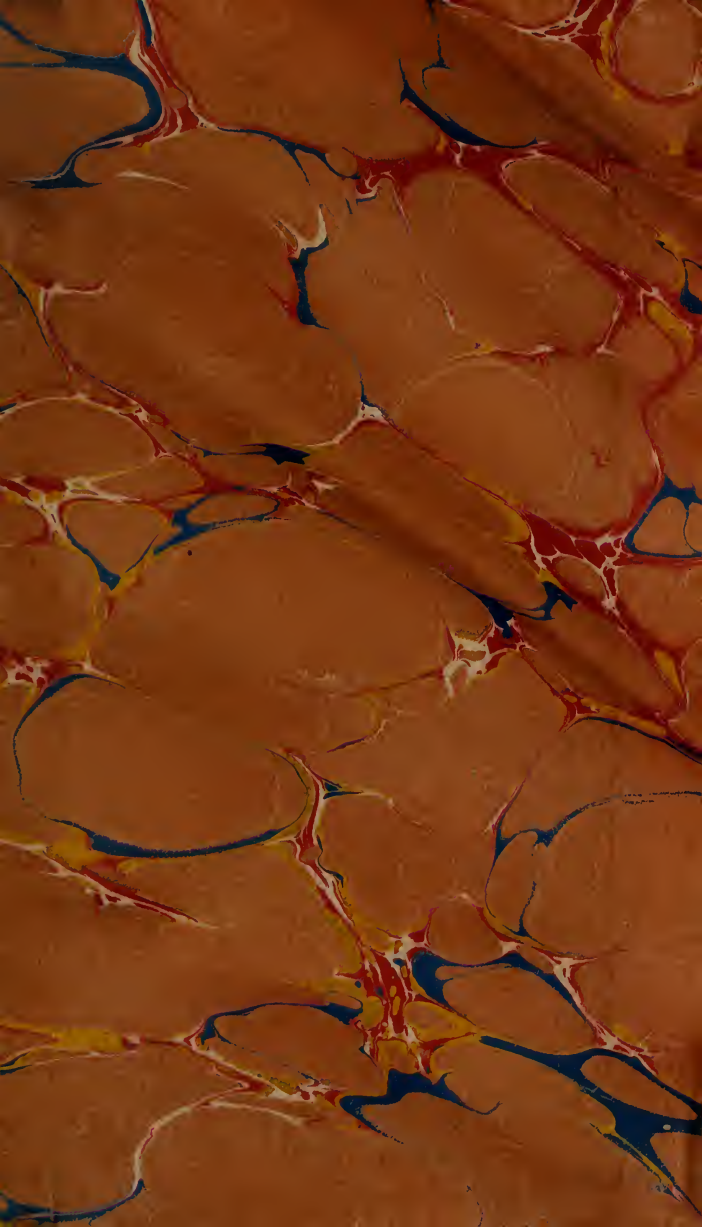












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